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OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR

His Life and Teachings

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His Life and Teachings

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1

The Historical Setting

THE OLDEST CIVILIZATIONS

TEN thousand years before Christ there was nothing in the world, so far as we know, that we would call by the name of civilization, though mankind was already on the march. Five thousand years before Christ, what we call civilization began to stir. Three thousand years before Christ, men were building cities in the Nile Valley, and in the land between the two rivers which is called Mesopotamia. They had gods and temples; they had priests and kings and scribes; they could write books; they had organized knowledge and skills.

The civilization on the Nile is known to us as Egypt. The civilization between the two rivers is known to us as Babylon, though Babylon was only one of the great cities in that area. It was from this area, first called Sumer and Akkad, that civilization spread eastward into India and China, which developed along their own lines. Europe, too, learned a great deal from Babylon, as Babylon did from Egypt: city-building, road-making, writing, banking, and the beginning of art and science and religion.

In those far-off times, there were ambitious monarchs who created great empires. More than two thousand years before Christ, Sargon, King of Sumer and Akkad, called himself king of the four quarters of the world. Seven hundred years before Christ, another Sargon reigned in Asshur, which

we refer to as Assyria; and he was succeeded by Sennacherib, who very nearly captured Jerusalem in the time of the prophet Isaiah. Some six hundred years before Christ, in 587 or 586, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon captured Jerusalem, and burned the temple of God. These great conquerors were not much concerned with Jerusalem; they were fighting against Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and Jerusalem was in the way.

The children of Israel were a simple and rather backward group of tribes which inhabited the hill-country of Palestine, where they grew wheat and olives and vines. They were not strong enough to stand up to the great empires, but they had something to contribute to the growth of civilization. They believed in One God, who was a God of love and justice and mercy, and the creator of heaven and earth. They believed that he loved them, and had chosen them out of all the nations of the earth. He had sent them the great deliverer Moses when they were slaves in Egypt; he had set them free; he had guided them through the desert; he had given them the Law, and he had settled them in the holy land, as they called it. He was the only God.

Nebuchadnezzar took all their leading families away as prisoners to Babylon; but he left the peasantry to cultivate the corn,[1] and the olives and the vines. It was a terrible day in the history of Israel, which they never forgot, but their faith in their God was so strong, that they felt quite sure that Jerusalem would be restored, the temple would be rebuilt, and an Israelite king would reign there once again. Before seventy years were over, Babylon was conquered by the Persians, and the Persian king allowed the Israelites to restore Jerusalem; the temple was rebuilt; but there was no Israelite king. The holy land was governed by Persian governors.

The Persian empire became the greatest of them all. Its monarch was called the Great King. He took Egypt, he took Asia Minor, and he attempted to invade Europe. And now one of the greatest conflicts in all history began. The west had

[1] In the Bible "corn" means wheat or barley, or any kind of grain.

to defend itself against the east; and the Greeks undertook this immense task. They were so successful that the time came when they invaded the east and overthrew the Great King himself. Three hundred years before Christ, Alexander the Great made himself the master of this vast oriental empire; he even penetrated into Iran, the home of the Persians, and into the northern kingdoms of India. A western power was the master of the world now.

We can see how all this looked to the Israelites by reading the seventh chapter of Daniel. To this small unfortunate nation, the history of civilization looked like a succession of great monsters rising up out of the dark abyss and destroying one another and everything else. Babylon or Persia or Greece were all alike to them; but the Greeks, with their iron-clad soldiers, were the worst. They appear in his vision as the monster with the great iron teeth which devoured and broke the other nations to pieces and stamped them with its feet. But the faith of Daniel looks on into the future, and he sees God taking part in world history. and a new kingdom coming, which is not like a beast at all, but like a "Son of Man". This was to be God's kingdom; and this is what the Israelites prayed would come. Jesus had much to say about God's kingdom.

THE LANGUAGES

Daniel's book was mostly written in Aramaic, which was the language of the Persian empire. The Jews were forgetting their old language, and talking the language of the conquering power; but their prayers were still offered in the old language of Israel, which is called Hebrew; and their sacred books were written in it. It has never been forgotten. Hebrew is the official language of the Israeli state to-day, and the synagogue service is still offered in Hebrew; and, what is important for us is that their sacred books, which we call the Old Testament, were written in this language, and that is why Christian scholars still have to learn Hebrew. It is the oldest literature in the world.

But ordinary Jews talked Aramaic, like the nations round

about them. Jesus and his disciples talked Aramaic. It was very like the language of the Syrian churches.

But the Greeks were the masters of the world now, and Greek kings ruled in Egypt and throughout the east. The Greek language became the universal language of government and business and science and education. It was rather like the situation in the province of Canada where I live. Latin is the language of the Roman Catholic service, and French is the language of the people; but French Canadians who want to do business with the rest of North America, must learn English. The spread of the Greek language was a good thing, since it carried everywhere the first notions of science and philosophy and democracy. Our own civilization is founded on the Greek so far as these matters are concerned. The words philosophy and democracy are Greek words; and so are most of our scientific terms, like atomic energy. The atomic theory was suggested by a Greek named Democritus.

It was natural, therefore, that Christianity would spread in the Greek language; for the Jews in the great cities were talking in Greek, and had Greek translations of their scriptures long before the time of Christ. There were Jews everywhere now, and every great city had a Jewish quarter and a Jewish synagogue. And so the way was prepared for the gospel.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

There was one great nation, however, which the Greeks were unable to conquer, and that was the Romans, who were supreme in war, in business, and in organization. The Romans conquered the Greeks, but never succeeded in making themselves masters of the whole oriental empire. The country of the Jews became a border state. It was in the year 63 B.C. (Before Christ) that the Roman general, Pompey the Great, captured Jerusalem and entered the temple of God, which, however, he left unharmed. From that time, Palestine or Judaea, as the Romans called it, was part of the Roman Empire.

In 37 B.C. they put Judaea under a king, whose name was Herod, famous in history as the king in whose reign Christ

was born. We shall return to him in the next chapter, when we have finished our historical survey. He died in 4 B.C., which shows that the computation of our years B.C. and A.D. is incorrect. Jesus must have been born about 5 or 6 B.C.: "Before Christ". This date is not very important for our purposes, however.

When Herod died, the country was divided between his sons, and, as St Matthew says, Archelaus took Judaea, by which he means the southern part of the country round Jerusalem. Before long he was deposed, and a new arrangement was made. A Roman governor was put in who lived in the sea-coast city of Caesaraea; the High Priests were left to run things in Jerusalem, subject to the Roman governor's authority. This is the arrangement which we find in the gospels. The High Priests conduct the trial of Jesus, but they cannot condemn him to death; they have to ask the governor to do that.

In the north, Herod Antipas, a son of the old Herod, remained as ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip as ruler of Decapolis, on the eastern side of the Lake of Galilee; the Romans would not let these rulers use the title of "king", but naturally they did. In between Galilee and Judaea, was the little country of Samaria. The Samaritans claimed to be true Israelites, and had a temple of their own on Mount Gerizim; the Jews in Judaea did not admit this claim, and said their temple was the only true one. The Samaritans were under the Roman governor too. A glance at the map is really necessary, in order to understand this arrangement.

THE CHRONOLOGY

The dates for the expansion of the gospel rest on a very simple scheme; the crucifixion of Jesus in A.D. 30, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70.

The head of the Roman empire in A.D. 30 was named Tiberius; but all Roman Emperors took the name of Caesar, and were commonly called by it. At the time of the crucifixion, his governor or agent in Judaea was Pontius Pilate, who

probably never guessed that his name would be remembered for ever in connection with so unimportant a matter as the execution of a Jewish party leader. There are disputes among the learned about the date of the crucifixion, since the indications are not perfectly certain; but the evidence clearly indicates 29 or 30.

The gospel spread very rapidly. The Acts of the Apostles tells some of the story, but by no means all. It had reached Rome by 54 or 55 when St Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans. We have no information whatever as to who took it there. By the year 64, it had grown to such an extent as to alarm the government. At this time the Roman Emperor was the weak and vicious Nero. In July of 64, a fire broke out in Rome, which destroyed a great part of the city, and it was agreed by the authorities that the Christians should be punished for it. Great numbers were put to death, with cruel tortures. Among these were the apostles Peter and Paul. We would like to have accounts of their martyrdoms, but unfortunately none have survived; but we have very early allusions to them, and the church tradition on this matter is to be trusted. It is accepted by modern scholars.

This date is a very important one, therefore.

To this we add the fact that in the year 66 the Jews rebelled against the Romans. The war was a very hard one. It was interrupted by civil war in the Empire itself; but in the year 70 the Romans under Titus captured Jerusalem, and completely destroyed it, the temple of God being burned for the second time. This period of forty years provides the historical background for the writing of our gospels; and the date of the fire and persecution in 64 should also be remembered.

ST MARK'S GOSPEL

The gospel according to St Mark was written in Rome between the fire in 64 and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70. There is a surprising amount of agreement among scholars on this point. Mark does not date his gospel, or tell us how he came to write it; but a scholar of St John, of the name of

Papias, tells us that he was the interpreter of Peter, and wrote down the teachings of that apostle. This quite agrees with all our other evidence; for Mark's home in Jerusalem was well known to Peter; and Peter, in his epistle, calls him his dear son; and Mark's gospel is full of stories in which Peter figures. So Mark's gospel has a very special interest for us. The apostle had died for his faith in the persecution, and his pupil Mark wrote down his teachings for the benefit of the Roman church. It seems likely that he used other sources too. He wrote in Greek; Peter, perhaps, was not very fluent in Greek, since he needed an interpreter.

Mark seems to be the oldest of the four gospels. In Mr Rieu's translation, in the "Penguin Books", it is placed first for this reason. It is a good thing to have a modern translation by the side of the old one, and the "Penguin" edition of the *Four Gospels* may be recommended. Its introduction is most interesting.

EARLIER GOSPELS

There were written gospels before Mark, however; or at any rate written documents of some sort. At first the Christians were very happy to have the word-of-mouth reports of the disciples or their pupils. Among the Jews, the custom was for the students or "disciples" to learn by heart the teaching of their Rabbi, and then teach their own disciples in the same way. This is called "oral" tradition. When the gospel got out into the world, the gentiles did not seem to have been content with this. Well before the time of Mark, the teachers in the apostolic schools had begun to write down the teachings of Jesus, and the stories of his wonderful acts, and his passion and crucifixion. We know a good deal about one of these lost gospel documents, which is alluded to by scholars by the capital letter "Q". It was used by Matthew and Luke, but not by Mark.

Even the Jewish Christians had gospel documents. Papias tells us that the apostle Matthew wrote a gospel of some sort in Aramaic, but everybody had to interpret it the best way they could. He did not have an interpreter, like Peter. This

Aramaic gospel does not exist to-day; it is not the gospel of Matthew that we have.

ST LUKE

There were so many different books when St Luke wrote, that his friend Theophilus, a Roman official who was now a Christian, had become confused. Luke wrote a two-volume history of the beginning of Christianity, the second volume of which is called the Acts of the Apostles. The Gospel of St Luke and his Acts of the Apostles are generally placed in the seventies, since he made use of Mark in writing it. He also used the mysterious "Q", since we find passages which are quite identical with passages in Matthew and must come from a common source; but he had other sources of information as well; and as he had spent two years in Palestine at Caesaraea, when St Paul was a prisoner there, it is generally supposed that he obtained the information then. He may even have begun writing his gospel then, well before Mark wrote his. Books often take a long time to write, and in the ancient world we find they were put together, piece by piece, out of older books.

Among the material which is peculiar to Luke, we have a number of beautiful stories about the birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus. He gives us tales of ordinary social life, like that of Jesus in the home of Martha and Mary; and parables with a deep human interest, like the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan. Luke was a Greek, and wrote more like an ordinary story-writer or biographer.

ST MATTHEW

The "Gospel according to St Matthew" is not now supposed to be written by the apostle of that name; but we shall see why it was called "according to Matthew". The author did not know the Gospel of St Luke; it must have been written about the same time as that gospel. He made use of Mark and of "Q"; but he had a great deal more material of much interest. It consists mostly of the teaching of Jesus, and

he has arranged it (along with other teachings of Jesus from Mark and "Q") in five fairly long sections. An example of these is the Sermon on the Mount, which occupies Matthew 5, 6, and 7. The Sermon on the Mount in Luke is much shorter (you will find it in Chapter 6). The writer of Matthew has enlarged it by combining teachings of Jesus from various sources. It was considered right in ancient times for a writer to bring together in this way teachings which dealt with the same subject, even if they were not all given at the same time; and it was certainly very convenient for the teacher, or for use in the services of the church, and Matthew's gospel is a church book for practical use.

Much of the teaching material which is peculiar to Matthew deals with Jewish or Jewish-Christian problems, which might not interest the gentile Christians for whom Luke wrote; and this makes us think of the gospel which Matthew the apostle had written in Aramaic for the Jewish Christians. We believe, therefore, that this gospel was called "according to Matthew" because it included the work of the apostle Matthew and made it generally available in Greek, at the same time emphasizing the teaching of Jesus that the gospel was for the whole world, not only for the Jews.

ST JOHN

After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 a group of bisciples of Jesus settled in Asia Minor in the cities where St Paul had founded Churches; St Philip at Hierapolis for instance, near Colossae, and St John at Ephesus. It was towards the end of the century that the Gospel according to St John was written at Ephesus. There are scholars who find it hard to believe that St John really lived so long, or that he wrote this gospel himself. But the apostles were young men when Jesus chose them, and John may not have been twenty at that time; and the evidence from second-century writers that he ended his life at Ephesus is too strong to be successfully denied. There are some, however, who hold that it was another disciple of Jesus who happened to

have the same name, or a disciple of John himself who happened to have the same name. These theories seem quite unnecessary.

On the other hand it seems quite possible that the old disciple was helped to write the book by his colleagues and pupils. The interesting points about this gospel are: that it contains a good deal of new material not found in the other gospels at all, which is what one might expect; and, secondly, that the disciple who wrote it did not hesitate to put the teaching of Jesus into his own words, so as to make it more easy for the Greek world to understand, and to bring out what Jesus had come to mean to him after a long lifetime of evangelization, church-building, and meditation. This gospel, therefore, is by way of being an interpretation of Jesus and his teaching, for the gentile Churches which had been evangelized and instructed by St Paul.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

We have other authorities from the period which support the historical gospel, but they cannot be said to add any fresh information which the four gospels do not give us. The other books of the New Testament, for instance, refer to the great facts of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus; they mention his twelve apostles and name some of them; and they refer to some of his teachings; but they are not biographies. The Roman historian Tacitus tells the tale of the great fire and the persecution at Rome in 64, and says that Jesus was put to death by Pontius Pilate. The Jewish historian Josephus has notices of the deaths of John the Baptist, and of Jesus, and of James the brother of Jesus; but his notice of Jesus seems to have been altered from its original form. The second generation of Christian writers have left few documents, and their references add nothing to what we already know. The Jewish Rabbis recorded some of their traditions about Jesus in the "Mishnah", and they are of considerable interest; but they do not add appreciably to what we know. After a while new gospels were composed by

imaginative writers, but they are valueless. Their authors know no more than we do.

Nevertheless, all these references support the historical character of the tradition by showing that it was widely known and widely received. The probability is that practically everything that was known about Jesus was included in one or other of the four gospels[1], which were the only ones to be received in the Church. It may be that some saying of Jesus which turns up in some second-century source, may be a genuine saying which has come down by word of mouth in the Church; but the number of these can be very few. Perhaps one or two of the additional stories may be based on fact; but this is even less likely. And the best of these were actually written into the margins of the manuscripts, and sometimes found their way into later manuscripts, and are actually included in church Bibles. Modern scientific study, however, is able to sort these out; and there are very few of them.

The four gospels were gradually accepted in all Churches, and combined into one book early in the second century. It was part of the consolidation of the catholic tradition; the creeds, the episcopal ministry, the four gospels, the other New Testament books, the rudiments of the Christian year, and the form of the sacraments, all originated in the time of the apostles, and were consolidated everywhere in the time of their successors.

[1] But see John 21. 25; more was known *then*.

2

The Son of David

THE ANCESTORS OF JESUS

THE materials that go into the makings of a human life are received through the family into which the man is born, the village or town he grows up in, and the natural and social surroundings of his young life. Jesus had every advantage in this way. The family into which he was born was poor; the village he grew up in was small and obscure; his surroundings were the hills and fields. Nothing could be better.

His family claimed to be of royal descent; and perhaps this may not be as remarkable as we think. Many families in the hills of Wales or Ireland make similar claims, which some of them substantiate by producing genealogies which give the names of their ancestors, generation by generation. There is no need to smile at this. We are just what our ancestors have made us. Their living substance lives in us again.

The family of Jesus preserved two such genealogies, one of which is given us by St Luke, and the other by St Matthew. The genealogy in St Luke traces the descent from father to son; but the genealogy in St Matthew traces it from king to king, where the lists of the kings are available, and then presumably from one lawful successor to the next. Down to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 or 586 B.C. the names were obtained from the Bible; after that point they must have been obtained from the national records or from the family tradition. In old simple conservative societies there was nothing difficult about this. Our Maori friends in New Zealand can repeat the names of their ancestors for a

longer period still, for their genealogies go back eight hundred years to the time when their first ancestors landed in the islands and this is done without ever having had them written down. The very fact that the family of Jesus treasured these names, and valued the tradition they stood for, helps us to understand the kind of people they were. They did not think that the age in which they lived had all the wisdom and all the knowledge. They admired and loved their ancestors of long ago who had made their nation great.

KING DAVID

It was about a thousand years before the birth of Christ that his great ancestor David became the first king of all Israel in Jerusalem. He captured the city, and made it his royal residence, thus providing his people with a capital, and making a nation of them. As the Psalm said:

> Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity in itself;
> For thither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord;
> There is the throne of judgement, even the throne of the house of David.

We are told more about David than anybody else in the Old Testament. He was a shepherd and a musician, a soldier and a poet, a man of charm and sweetness and generosity, a great fighter but merciful to his enemies, a wonderful leader of men, a simple believer in God. The story is told with remarkable realism in the Books of Samuel, which are the oldest books of history in the world. They do not spare David; for the old Hebrew literature does not conceal the sins of its heroes. David is depicted as the favourite of God, but he is punished for all his sins. He is forgiven and restored, and God promises that the kingdom will remain in his family for ever.

His son Solomon enjoyed wealth and power, and was famed for his wisdom. He built the temple of God in Jerusalem, which David had planned and provided for. This temple was not so large, perhaps, as we imagine it; but it was a magnificent structure. It consisted of a great square courtyard

with buildings all round it. Towards the western end of it was the huge rock where the fire burned perpetually and the sacrifices were offered by the priests. Behind this altar was the holy house or sanctuary of God. It was said that when King Solomon dedicated the temple, a cloud of light came down and filled this sanctuary: "the glory of the Lord filled the temple of the Lord". This was a poetic way of saying that the Lord was truly present with his people when they all came up to Jerusalem to worship him. When Solomon dedicated the temple, he said:

> The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness:
> But I have surely built thee a house to dwell in,
> Even a settled place for thee to abide in for ever.

He knew well that God was everywhere present in his creation: "Behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee: how much less this house that I have builded?" And yet he knew that his power and presence was in this place among his people. The temple site and the old rock-altar are still to be seen in Jerusalem.

The king, the city, and the temple became the heart and centre of the national life and the national religion; but they did not endure as David and Solomon had planned them. The descendants of David were not always worthy; the people were not always faithful; and God sent them prophets to warn and rebuke them, great men like Elijah and Isaiah and Jeremiah. The prophets thought of God's power and presence in a different way. When his Spirit came upon them, he spoke in their hearts, and gave them a message to give to the people; and this is what they called the Word of God. Their message was that if the kings and people were not faithful, the city would be taken and destroyed by their enemies. The Books of the Kings, and the writings of the great Prophets, record the events of this period. The city was taken by Nebuchadnezzar in 587–6, the walls were pulled down, and the temple burned. The last king was carried away as a captive to Babylon.

But the prophets had also said that the city, the temple,

and the king would be restored. The city and the temple were restored, but not the king. There were no more kings of the family of David. Yet the people went on expecting that such a king would be given them.

THE HOPE OF THE MESSIAH

This expectation was part of a very large hope, which appeared in many different forms, some of them very fantastic; in prayers and songs and hymns and dreams and poems and strange flights of fancy called apocalypses; nearly always in symbols and allegories which were never intended to be taken literally. God would come and destroy the enemies; he would work vengeance on the heathen empires; he would make Jerusalem the greatest and most wonderful city in the world; all the nations would come and worship there. Sometimes they spoke of a new heaven and a new earth; this present heaven and earth would pass away; there would be a universal resurrection and a universal judgment; there would be a blessed immortality for the true Israelites, and a hell of torment for the wicked. More often, I believe, they thought of a good time to come in their own land, when the earth would produce great quantities of corn and wine and oil, and everybody would be happy. The righteous dead, who had suffered in past times, would rise to share it.

We do not always find the new David in these apocalypses, but the simple people cherished this hope. The new David would be more wonderful than the old. One of his titles was the Anointed or Messiah. Kings were anointed with oil at their coronation, just as our Queen is to-day. It signified the grace of God, or the gift of the Holy Spirit, which a king needed to rule well. The word Messiah was translated into Greek as the Christ. The Lord's Christ means the anointed of the Lord.

THE WORDS OF ISAIAH

Every Christian knows by heart the words of Isaiah in which he speaks of the Messiah: "Unto us a child is born,

unto us a son is given: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"; or "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel—God-with-us." They are part of the Christmas tradition. But the Jews who failed to believe in Jesus maintained that these verses should be explained in some other way; and it is necessary for us to consider this point, since many modern scholars agree with them. Some new translations prefer to render it: "The young woman is to bear a child" and so forth.

This is a very poor translation. The word in the Hebrew is *Almah*. The masculine form *Elem* means a boy who is old enough to be married, and the feminine form *Almah* means a girl who is old enough to be married. Eighteen was thought to be a good age for a boy to marry in those days, and the girl would be younger still. Two hundred years before Christ the Jews translated the word into Greek as *parthenos*, which means a virgin. That is what they thought it meant then; and that is what it does naturally imply. It is an uncommon word and should be given a rather poetic translation. It might be translated "the maiden", if you do not like the word virgin; but it is clear that the Jews did think it meant a virgin or they would not have translated it in that way.

But the Christian belief in the Virgin birth of Christ does not depend on the prophecy of Isaiah. It depends on the fact that the Christians of apostolic times received it as part of the gospel tradition. These first Christians thought it a wonderful thing that Isaiah had prophesied it long before; it was one of the many old prophecies which seemed to them to have been fulfilled in Christ; and the connection between prophecy and gospel remains a wonderful thing to this day. It is a remarkable historical fact that the Jews should have been so certain for so long that a Saviour would arise, in their own nation, from the family of David, who would win the trust and love of people in all nations. "There shall come forth a branch out of the stem of Jesse (out of the family of David, that is, who was Jesse's son) . . . and upon him shall the gentiles trust."

It is not our purpose to tell the stories of the gospel over again, since they should be read as they are in the words of the evangelists. All we can hope to do in this little book is to help people to do so.

There are two accounts of the birth of Jesus, and the reader can see for himself that they are quite independent. This is very fortunate, since it means that we have two independent witnesses. The story of Luke is told from the point of view of the Virgin Mary and of the women; the story of Matthew is told from the point of view of Joseph. They agree together on the outline of the story, though each has his own beautiful additions to it. They both mention the following facts.

Joseph was a descendant of David, they say; and it was very early believed that Mary was also a descendant of David, but the gospels do not say this. He was not a wealthy or important man, however; he was a carpenter, a fact which is mentioned in another part of the gospels. Mary was his "espoused wife".

Mary is likely to have been quite young; about fifteen or sixteen perhaps. She was engaged to Joseph; but in those days, engagement or "espousal" was a solemn thing; they were not married yet, but she was set apart to be so. Then it was discovered that she was going to be a mother. The truth was revealed to them by God; in a vision to Mary, as Luke tells us; in a dream to Joseph, as Matthew tells us. It was the act of God; the work of the Holy Spirit. We do not expect those who are not believing Christians to accept this story, though in point of fact the Mohammedans do. But believing Christians found no difficulty in accepting it then, as they do to-day. There would be no Christmas Day without it.

The marriage took place. The child was born at Bethlehem. He was called Jesus. The holy family went back to Nazareth, and made their home there.

There is a minor point to be explained. If it was Joseph who was descended from David, how can Jesus be regarded as a descendant of David? This is quite simple. The child

born and brought up in the house was regarded as a son, if the father so wished. He was the heir of David's line if Joseph so accepted him. In giving Joseph's own genealogy, Matthew proceeds from one king to the next, even if he was not his actual son; each king is regarded as the father of his successor; and this is the oriental way of speech.

MATTHEW'S STORIES

Matthew, who is using Jewish-Christian material, is interested in Jesus as king, an idea which runs right through his gospel. He brings in, by way of contrast, the evil king Herod who was at the end of his wicked and cruel reign. He was also interested in prophecy, and brings in some "wise men from the east", who had consulted the stars, and believed that the time had come for a king of the Jews to be born; and naturally they came to Herod's court.

It is an interesting story, and one which helps us to understand the times. The gospel does not say that they were kings, nor does it say that there were three of them. They were teachers of the Iranian or Persian religion, which believed, in its way, in one God. The expectation of a Saviour was not confined to the Jews at this time; other oriental nations shared this hope; and possibly these oriental star-gazers had studied Isaiah, as the poet Virgil seems to have done in Rome; or something very like it. The wise men of Israel directed him to Bethlehem, and there they found that there had indeed been a birth in the family of David. They gave their gifts and went their way. Herod ordered a massacre of children in Bethlehem, where there may have been other Davidic families, whose claims may have been taken seriously by the people. Herod's reign ended in a series of massacres in which he got rid of persons of influence. A Roman historian speaks of an occasion on which he had ordered the death of a number of children, and says that one of his own children was killed by mistake; this was reported to the reigning Emperor, who said it would be better to be one of Herod's pigs than one of his children.

The holy family escaped to Egypt, and then returned to Nazareth. A Jewish tradition says that Jesus had been in Egypt, but makes the visit occur when he was older, since it says that he learned magic there. Doubtless he had friends or relations there, for there were thousands of Jews in Egypt.

LUKE'S SONGS AND STORIES

A different picture is given by Luke, who has nothing to say about Herod or the wise men of Egypt. He introduces us to the temple in Jerusalem, and to simple country people living in the hills of Judaea, who were genuinely religious, and were devoutly praying that God would send the Messiah to deliver his people; out of the hand of Herod no doubt, and of the Romans, though Luke does not say this. There was Zacharias the old priest, and his wife Elizabeth, who were the parents of John the Baptist; and there were Simeon and Anna who frequented the temple courts, and spent their lives in prayer, waiting for comfort to come to Israel. This group felt the Holy Spirit as a real power in their hearts, and expressed themselves naturally in the language of the prophets and the psalmists, which they knew so well.

In the northern land, in the country of Galilee, at a city called Nazareth, a branch of the family of David lived, which included the carpenter Joseph who had a brother named Clopas, as we learn from the Jewish-Christian tradition.[1] There too lived Mary, who had a sister named Salome.[2] Luke it is who tells of her vision of the angel from heaven, who saluted her, and told her she was to be the mother of the Christ; of her visit to her cousin Elizabeth in the hill-country of Judaea; of the birth of John; of the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem to be enrolled in the census; of the birth in the stable (a cave, as a very early writer tells us); and the visit of the shepherds. He goes on to tell of the circumcision of the child on the eighth day, and

[1] Who may be identical with the Cleopas of Luke 24.18 and the Clopas of John. 19.25.

[2] Compare Mark 15.40 and Matthew 27.56.

his presentation in the temple on the fortieth according to the Law.

These pictures give us a wonderful view of the life and times, and help us to understand the history as a whole. The group of families to which he belonged were of royal and priestly descent, but they lived a simple country life; they were devoted to the old religion and to the temple; they were conscious of the Spirit of God working in their hearts, and they believed that the two children were destined by God to bring salvation to Israel. Luke records certain songs which they sang, which embodied this faith; the Benedictus as we call it, the Magnificat, and the Nunc Dimittis. They tell of John as the forerunner and Jesus as the Saviour. They know nothing yet of the gospel itself; they contain nothing about crucifixion or resurrection; but they enable us to understand the devotion and expectation which existed in Israel when Christ was born.

FURTHER INFORMATION

We cannot precisely say in what year Christ was born; but it was shortly before the death of King Herod in 4 B.C. We do not know the day of the year. Our Christmas Festival is a conventional date. Christians wanted to keep the birthday of Christ, so the eastern Churches chose January 6; the western Churches chose December 25. They are old customs in the Church, not historical dates. They come down to us as the "Epiphany" and the "Nativity".

Jesus grew up in Nazareth. He had several brothers and sisters, but it has been doubted whether they were his full brothers in the sense of being children of the Virgin Mary. A legend says that they were children of Joseph by an earlier wife. Many romantic stories came into existence in the second century after Christ, perhaps between A.D. 150 and 200; they are sometimes very pretty, but they have no more historical value than modern novels or films on the same subject, which cannot be trusted at all. But there is one point which does seem to make the theory likely. If these were full brothers and sisters of Jesus, why did he commit his mother

to the care of his cousin John, when he was dying? In Jewish law her children were bound to give her a home; it looks as if she had none of her own except Jesus.

So it may be that they were half-brothers or cousins. Anyway they all grew up in the same family, as related families do in the eastern countries. The names of the brothers were: James, who became the first bishop of the church in Jerusalem; Joses, Judah, Simon. Epistles written in the name of James and Jude are included in the New Testament. Among the cousins of Jesus were Simeon, the son of Clopas, and James and John, the sons of Salome, who had married a fisherman named Zebedee. Simeon succeeded James as the second bishop of Jerusalem.

THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS

The romantic gospels which began to be written about the end of the second century, apocryphal gospels as they are called, contain a number of stories about the childhood of Jesus; but they are historically quite useless. The real gospels only give one, and this is to be found in Luke.

Jewish children are exempt from keeping the Law, though they are taught prayers and Bible stories and home duties; but when they are thirteen years old they go through a religious ceremony in which they are made "sons of the Law" and are bound to perform all their duties as Israelites. It is a little like our custom of confirmation. When Jesus was twelve years old, his parents took him up to Jerusalem for the annual festival called the Passover, the same as our Easter. They went up for it every year in a caravan party with their relations and neighbours. They could also visit their relations in the hill-country of Judaea. Everyone knows how the child Jesus was left behind in the temple, when the caravan started on its way back to Galilee, and how he was found again, "sitting among the teachers listening to them and asking them questions"; but not everyone grasps the inwardness of the story.

The teachers of Israel were great men. Some of them were

members of the supreme council of seventy, which ruled the people, and was called the Sanhedrin. But they were not too great to spend time with little boys, and talk to them about the great things of God. Among them may have been the great Rabbi Hillel, who said that the chief thing in religion was to love God, and not do to others what they did not like; perhaps Jesus may have learned this from him. These great teachers had such a high opinion of the boy Jesus, that they let him sit among them as if he was a teacher too; for in those days the teachers sat and the pupils stood. It was a very high honour to be seated among them.

Luke records this story for the sake of the saying of Jesus that he ought to be in his Father's house, or about his Father's business—whichever is the right translation—and also to show that he was a good scholar. There is no basis for the idea that Jesus received no formal education. He did not apparently go through the Rabbinic Schools, but he quotes the scriptures as if he had, and even his enemies addressed him as a Rabbi or teacher. We need not think that he spent all his youth in Nazareth. He went up to Jerusalem for the festivals; he may even have made another journey into Egypt and studied there, as the Jewish Rabbis in the second century believed. He worked as a carpenter in his home town, or so the people said; "Is not this the carpenter?" they ask in Matthew's gospel; but many a Jewish Rabbi had a trade and worked at it, as St Paul did at Corinth.

3

The Beginning of the Gospel

JOHN THE BAPTIST

A NUMBER of years now pass before we come to what Mark describes as the beginning of the gospel. It was in the year 26 or 27, if we rightly interpret the language of Luke. He calls it the fifteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Tiberius, and Augustus had made Tiberius his colleague as Emperor at the end of the year A.D. 11. The date comes too late if we start counting from A.D. 14, when Augustus died and Tiberius became sole Emperor.

A new movement of religious revival was launched by John the Baptist in the desert. The word desert does not mean wastes of sand; it means lonely unoccupied country. Out of the desert the religion of Israel had come. Moses and Elijah had ministered in the desert, and John was looked upon as a second Elijah. He abandoned civilized living; he adopted a rugged life by the side of the Jordan; he had a message from God. He did not go to the people; they came to him. They flocked together from Jerusalem and from all parts of Judaea; they heard his message; they were convinced; they were baptized in the River Jordan, confessing their sins. Everybody regarded John as a prophet; his influence with the people was enormous.

The appeal he made was through his simplicity and sincerity and zeal. There were plenty of so-called prophets in those days; some of them had political ambitions, and others had strange fancies about the end of the world, "eschatology" as it is called in modern books; there are always such people.

But John had no politics and no eschatology, so far as we can see. He revived the religion of the old prophets; men must repent if they would escape the wrath of God. He does not embroider this message or enlarge upon it. There is something very wrong in Israel, and God is about to judge his people; repentance is offered for a limited time therefore. Then the judgment. God's harvest to-day; God's fire that no man can quench.

Those who accepted the offer were baptized. It was not a new ceremony, but John was using it in a new way. Total immersion in running water or a deep pool or cistern in the rock, was one of the ceremonies of the Law of Moses by which an Israelite could be freed from his sins. Converts from the gentile nations were baptized before or after they were circumcised; but John's baptism was a baptism for penitent Israelites. It marked their repentance and forgiveness; it prepared them to face the future. We say it marked their forgiveness; we cannot be absolutely sure that it professed to bestow forgiveness; but probably it did.

We would like to have more information about this evangelical movement, since it was the first stage in the launching of the Christian gospel, and the institution of what became a Christian sacrament. We can conjecture, however, that it had this effect: those who accepted it were set apart from other Israelites; when the judgment of God came, they would not be under judgment; they would be under forgiveness. John, however, was not satisfied with what he was doing; he knew it lacked something. The hearts of his converts were not so deeply touched as he would wish. There was no outpouring of the Holy Spirit. "I can only baptize you with water," he said. "There is someone coming after me who is stronger than I am; I am not worthy to stoop down and unlace his shoes; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with Fire."

A number of Galileans were drawn into this new movement; not only Jesus, but others as well; certainly Peter and Andrew and Philip, and a man called Nathaniel; and two others also, who were probably James and John; and more, for when a new apostle was chosen to fill the place of Judas, they looked for one whose Christian experience had begun with the "Baptism of John". When the apostles preached the gospel, they began from the Baptism of John. That was when they first became his disciples.

They were baptized then, and Jesus among them. As Jesus came up from the waters of Jordan, he was conscious of a sudden accession of power from heaven. Whether there were others there who saw what he saw, and heard what he heard, can never be quite clear, though John the Baptist does say, in the fourth gospel, that he had a vision too; he saw the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus. What Jesus saw must have been told to the apostles by Jesus himself; he saw the heavens open, and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and there was a voice which said, "Thou art my dear Son; I am well pleased in thee."

It is one of the visionary experiences in the gospel, and the modern reader, with his matter-of-fact mind, finds it hard to realize that they are not so very extraordinary. Such visions do come to people, but more perhaps in times and places of great faith and intense waiting upon God, than in the modern world of comfort and materialism. Truth comes into the mind suddenly and clothes itself in familiar symbols and phrases. Many great saints have seen such visions and heard such voices.

This vision was a revelation of God as Father; the barrier or boundary between heaven and earth was broken; the Spirit of God came rushing into the heart; a voice was heard which said, "My dear Son". The vision meant more than that; but that is enough here by way of explanation. It was Jesus as Son of God, experiencing the love of the Father as a power that filled his body and soul. New beginnings in

religion came through the leadership of great religious leaders; great religious leaders have a profound conviction of their call to their work; often it comes in this sudden way; Jesus was no exception. It seems probable, too, that the crowd which stood around, was conscious of the power of God in action; for Jesus and his apostles could refer to this event as a beginning of the gospel; a consecration of Jesus to his work, as it were. We can hardly say more.

THE CONFLICT WITH SATAN

The story of the vision is carried further, and it continues to be told in the language of symbolism, which is often the best language for the great spiritual realities. He has been armed with the Holy Spirit, and he must go out to fight against the powers of evil. The Spirit drives him out into the desert where he fasts and prays for forty days. He is alone with the wild creatures and with the unseen powers, which are called the angels of God; he also met the mighty power of temptation with which everyone has to wrestle; Satan, as Jesus calls it; the Enemy or Adversary, well known in every heart.

The nature of the temptations of Jesus is disclosed in three symbolic pictures, the meaning of which is very profound. In the first he overcomes the temptation to change stones into bread; it means that he must not use his great powers to secure his own bodily comfort or well-being. In the second he refused to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple; he must not use his great powers to make everybody wonder at him, and win their allegiance in that way. In the third he sees all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time; he must not yield an inch to Satan in order to win them for himself. Here, truly, are three of the great temptations that men yield to: to eat bread without toil or labour, to have everyone applaud one and think how wonderful one is, to have power over other men's lives. These were not to be his way. He came in poverty and want; he came without display or parade; he was at the service of everybody. As for

his wonderful powers, he did use them to heal the sick and to feed the hungry; but he wished such acts to remain unknown. Such seems to be the inner meaning of these tales of spiritual vision and spiritual conflict.

JESUS IN JUDAEA

We are not well informed about the next period in the life of Jesus, but it would seem that he spent some time in Judaea, working in close touch with John. The fourth gospel tells us of a visit to Galilee with his disciples for a wedding. After that he was in Jerusalem, where he attempted to purge the temple of its commercialism, and had his conversation with Nicodemus about the necessity of the new birth through water and the Spirit; but we are rather baffled, because Mark and the others place the "Cleansing of the Temple" two years later, just before the crucifixion.

The fact is that our evangelists do not always place events in their strict historical order. It is possible that they did not always know it; but it is also clear that they did not always care. They sometimes arranged events according to their subject-matter. It is possible that Mark told this story in the part of his narrative where he brought Jesus to Jerusalem for the last time, so as to explain the hostility of the high priests. Opinions differ, but I think perhaps John put it in the historical place. Some have suggested that it is an action which could have been repeated.

John goes on to tell of further work by Jesus in Judaea, and of arguments between his disciples and John's. By and by he was making and baptizing more disciples than John. He decided to go into Galilee.

Mark gives an additional reason for this decision. John had been put in prison by King Herod Antipas of Galilee. Herod had divorced his wife, who was an Arabian princess, and taken his brother's wife instead; and John had been bold enough to denounce this wicked act. He said quite straight out, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." So Herod imprisoned him in the fortress of Masada in

Trans-Jordania. He treated him with respect, however, and sometimes listened to him preaching. His new wife was waiting her time to secure his death.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, says that Herod imprisoned John because he was afraid of his influence with the people. No doubt the people were shocked, and it must have been a great blow to John's followers. But the movement had to go on. Jesus was quite clear now about what he intended to do. In the first place he decided to fix his headquarters in Galilee. It was Herod's country, but he was among his own friends and relations.

THE GOSPEL IN GALILEE

I think we may say with comparative certainty that it was in the year 28 that Jesus came into Galilee again, to preach the gospel and to form a body of followers that would survive after his own death, under the leadership of his twelve chosen apostles. We have come to the period of his life which we are well informed about, even though every incident cannot be placed in its correct order. The story of Mark begins at this point, and while it looks rather as if it all took place within a single year, closer examination shows that it required more time. We therefore place the beginning of the gospel in Galilee fairly early in 28, so as to allow practically two years before the crucifixion in 30.

Mark gives a short summary of the gospel which Jesus preached: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel." Jesus said more than that, of course, but that is the short form of words in which it was summed up. It is what is called in Greek a "kerugma"; the kind of proclamation which a herald makes. The messengers of the gospel acted as heralds or ambassadors of God, bringing an announcement or proclamation from him; to translate this picturesque word as "preach" does not quite give the full strength of it.

What was the "kerugma" or proclamation? First, that the time had come. This meant the time that was spoken of by

the prophets. There were many old prophecies which had never been fulfilled; but now the time had come.

Secondly, God's Kingdom was very close; the word means "It has come near". Jesus uses the same word again when Judas Iscariot is coming to betray him: "he is at hand". It was as near as that. We shall have to consider more carefully what Jesus meant by God's Kingdom; it will be enough here to say that it meant his power and glory working among men. We note a likeness between the Baptism Vision and the Gospel Proclamation; they both express the idea of God's Spirit or Voice or Kingdom or Glory, breaking through into this world among men. That is the true note of all evangelical religion; it means the grace of God in action here and now. The Times are fulfilled, means Now; the arrival of God's Kingdom, means Here.

Thirdly, we have the word Repent. This is the continuation of John's message, about which we will have more to say.

Fourthly, Jesus adds to repentance the idea of faith. What is called for is faith in God, and faith in the proclamation which Jesus is making. He does not say faith in himself as yet. He says faith in his mission and in the message that he is bringing. Everything in the Gospel springs out of these ideas.

THE FOUR FISHERMEN

Walking along by the Lake of Galilee Jesus saw two figures that he very well knew; they were Simon and Andrew, standing in the water, and using the hand-net. "Come over here," he shouted. "Come after me, and I'll make you fishers of men." They left everything to follow him. Such is the brief story in Mark. Luke has a longer story, in which Jesus is preaching from Simon's boat, and when the preaching is over, asks him to launch out into deeper water. Once there, he asks him to let down his nets, but Simon protests that he has been fishing all night and has caught no fish. However, he does do what Jesus says, and is rewarded by a phenomenal catch. His partners in the other boat, James and John, have

to help him to get it in; and when it is in, it nearly sinks the boat. Simon is overcome by the magnitude of the occurrence, and says rather uncouthly, "Don't come near me, Lord; I'm a sinful man." Jesus says, "Never mind; you're going to catch men from now on."

These are some of the tales of the new companionship which Jesus now established with his old friends, and their intimate life in the boat and on the water's edge. No doubt he baptized there in addition to preaching, and this bringing in of converts through the water was what he compared to fishing. It was not his practice, however, John says, to baptize personally; he left that to his disciples; so we can see what one of the duties of these men would be.

It was, no doubt, a little harbour where the fishermen could draw up their boats, or anchor them a few feet out. According to Mark, James and John were mending their nets when Jesus called them. They were young fellows, working for their father Zebedee, and were in the boat with him and with the hired men. They left him at once, and followed Jesus. It will be remembered that they were his cousins.

Simon was a married man. He and his brother Andrew came from Bethsaida, at the north end of the lake; but they had a house nearby, which they all went into. This, no doubt, was their headquarters. It was here that the crowds brought their sick and demented and laid them at the door, for Jesus to heal, after sunset, on the sabbath when Jesus preached in the synagogue. Simon must have enjoyed telling these stories later on, when he travelled among the gentile Churches, under his new name of Peter. It is fortunate for us that Mark wrote them down.

The little group that came into existence in this happy way was never broken up. Later on, when Jesus had twelve personal disciples, the four were more intimate with him than the rest, and tended to take the lead, though Andrew seems not to have been so prominent as Peter and James and John. Later still they were the leading figures in the Christian Church.

The site of Capernaum, on the shore of the Lake of Galilee, has been identified, and also the ruins of a second- or third-century synagogue, which stands, no doubt, on the site of the first-century church in which Jesus preached that morning. The people had noted that he spoke with authority, not like the scribes, who expounded this or that text of scripture, and quoted this or that learned Rabbi. Jesus spoke with such effect as to amaze them. This word, which is constantly used, is a very strong one; they were stunned, and the impression was enhanced when he silenced the interruptions of a demented individual in the congregation with two strong words of command, which brought him to his senses.

Jesus went round Galilee with the four fishermen. He preached in the various synagogues. He visited small villages as well as towns. Wherever he went, the same thing happened. A word from him would calm the demented; his touch brought healing to the sick. This was not his primary purpose; he tried to avoid the crowds who surged around him whenever he appeared in public. One day, when a leper came beseeching him to heal him, he put out his hand and touched him; but when he had done it, he told him to be off, and not to tell anyone about it, except the priest to whom he had to report his cure. It was no use. His fame went about everywhere; presently it was not safe for him to enter villages. He stayed outside in "desert places".

When he came back to Capernaum he got into the house again without anyone knowing, and managed to keep himself to himself for a few days; but by and by he was heard of. The crowds arrived bringing the sick with them. They were so dense that it was not easy to get near, and people made holes in the roof to let down the sick into the room where he was. We shall return to this case, for we must consider these acts of healing and "casting out evil spirits" a little more carefully.

We do not know how long this stage lasted; but there was a new departure when he chose a fifth disciple. This was Levi, or Matthew, the "publican" whom Jesus took from his work at the customs office. A "publican" meant a clerk or official or executive officer, who had to do with the collection of taxes, which was a rough and tyrannical matter in those days. The publican was unpopular because he represented King Herod or the Romans. He was not above using force or fraud to get his money. He was an outcast. The respectable religious people would have nothing to do with him.

The house of Matthew became a second centre for the evangelical work of Jesus, this time among the rather disreputable classes to which Matthew belonged. Jesus joined them at their suppers, and the respectable people were shocked. How can your master sit there, eating and drinking with publicans and sinners, the Pharisees asked his disciples. Jesus overheard the question. "A doctor attends to the sick," he said, "not the well. I didn't come to call the righteous; I came to call the sinners." Jesus was bringing the movement which John had started into touch with people who were not much connected with religion; but John and his disciples did not quite approve. Perhaps they were a little over-righteous too.

The houses of Peter and Matthew, in Capernaum, were the first centres of Christian life. They were what afterwards came to be called Churches; or the predecessors of Churches. In the epistles of St Paul we read of Churches in the house of this or that convert. It looks as if Peter and Matthew had put their houses at the disposal of Jesus for the work of evangelization.

4

The Son of Man

THE SON OF MAN

WHEN the paralytic man was let down through the roof into the room of the house where Jesus was teaching, Jesus looked at him and forgave him his sins; "My child," he said, "your sins are forgiven." The Pharisees who were sitting there were shocked at this; they said only God could forgive sins. Jesus asked them what they thought was easier, to cure the sick man or to forgive him his sins; but, "Just to show you," he said, "that the Son of Man has got power to forgive sins on earth"—he spoke to the sick man—"Get up, and pick up the mattress you are lying on, and walk home." And the man got up at once and did so.

Jesus often spoke of himself as the Son of Man, and it seems to us an easy democratic title; and so it was. It was just a way of saying MAN in the language which he spoke; but it did mean, on his lips, the MAN in some special sense, as we can very well see.

The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head; the Son of Man must suffer many things; in these sayings it suggests his present life of poverty and hardship; but he also used it when he thought of future glory. The Son of Man will be killed, and after three days rise again; the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. People at the time did not address Jesus as the Son of Man, or speak about him as the Son of Man; it was a way he had of talking about himself. In doing this, he was using a kind of language which everybody understood, even though he used it in a

new way, but it was the old language of poetry and symbol which we find in the prophets and psalmists.

THE NEW ADAM

In the first place, the word could be used for the common man or "Everyman"; all mankind. One of the words for man in Hebrew is Adam. In the first chapter of Genesis there is a wonderful poem which describes the creation of man; he was to be the lord of creation, and have authority over everything else that God had made; his destiny was a very lofty one. In the second chapter, there is a "myth", or parable, in which he loses his claim to eternal life; he is tempted by the serpent, and breaks the commandment of God, and becomes liable to death. Now this myth has a profound meaning to it. Man on this planet was predestined to eternal life; he was to make himself master of the world and to live for ever; *if* he kept God's commandments. But that is not how it has turned out. Man has not made himself master of creation; he is destined to die.

When Jesus speaks of himself as Son of Man, he is certainly referring to the vision of a heavenly Son of Man in Daniel 7.13, a Son of Man who "comes with the clouds of heaven". The Son of Man, by the time of Jesus, meant the Man from heaven who would be given dominion and authority among men on earth.

Jesus is a man like other men; he shares the same nature as the common man; but he has something more. He can speak and act for God. He does not say, "God will forgive you"; he says, "Your sins are forgiven"; he speaks as if he were God. The more closely you study it, the more clearly you see that Jesus loved to call himself the Son of Man, because it was in him, *as a man*, that God was revealing himself to men; and he was revealing himself in act and power and personality. He did not come with doctrines about God, or statements about his nature ; he came as God or for God; or God came as Man. People have to see God in him as he speaks and acts.

There are vast theologies about the relations of God and

man in Jesus; but we need not trouble ourselves much about them for the purposes of this book. What we have to remember is that the revelation of the personality of God, which forms the heart of the Christian gospel, is given in the personality of Jesus as personality. Jesus gave no book to the Church; he gave himself. It is the MAN Jesus that is the centre of the gospel. This statement may not be, by any means, clear at present; but it should become so.

JESUS AND THE CROWDS

Everybody noticed that Jesus spoke with an amazing sense of power or authority. The word authority is another keyword. Great crowds thronged around him far and near. He was nearly crushed by them; that is why he spoke from a boat. It looks sometimes as if he disliked the crowds and avoided them; yet when they came, he felt a profound sympathy for them, so lost, so aimless, like a flock of sheep with no shepherd. He knew how to dominate them. He could do anything with them. They would listen to him for long periods.

The sensation they felt was not what we would expect. It was one of wonder and amazement. Mark says that they were stunned, or beside themselves. He even speaks of fear. This element of wonder mixed with fear, is the first step in the appreciation of God's power, present and working. A piece of old manuscript which was discovered in Egypt contains a saying of Jesus which is not found in any of our four gospels: "He that seeketh, let him not cease till he find, and when he find let him wonder, and when he wonder let him reign". This sensation of wonder is the first reaction to the gospel stories if we are to understand them at all. The word "miracle" means a wonder.

The power or authority of Jesus was displayed in three specific ways, in the forgiveness of sins, in the healing of the sick, and in the casting out of demons. It is sometimes called authority, and sometimes power. Jesus insisted that his healings depended upon the faith of the patient. "Go in peace," he sometimes said; "it is your faith that has saved you."

The healing acts of Jesus were what we call miracles; that is to say "wonders", or acts of power; but they are not entirely beyond human power or human understanding. He actually sent out his disciples to heal the sick and cast out demons in his name; he gave them the "authority".

There is a whole range of diseases in which such healings have been reported; and on the whole the kind of diseases which were healed by Jesus are much the same as those which are sometimes healed by faith and prayer to-day. This shows that the stories about Jesus are not wonder-stories which were invented to glorify his memory. They are never entirely contrary to the processes of nature. We do not read of broken limbs miraculously re-united, or anything of that sort. It is the deaf man, or the blind man, or the paralytic, who is restored to health and vigour. There is the leper; but we do not know exactly what skin disease the man had; and there are cases of skin diseases wonderfully cured. I do not say this with the idea of lessening the wonder of these stories, but to point out the actual facts about them.

Jesus was not just a wonder-worker, who waved his hand and spoke the magic word. He expected the co-operation of the patient; he could do no mighty works where there was no faith. And sometimes we find him inquiring into the history of the case, or manipulating the afflicted part with his hands, or even (it would seem) finding it rather hard to effect a cure. There was sympathy and patience and understanding as well as spiritual power. Nor did he work entirely by words of prayer or command; the power of God was in his hands and his eyes and his tongue. It demanded physical action and mental attention, as well as spiritual effort.

When we have said all this, the effect still is that Jesus possessed those powers and exercised them in a super-normal degree. But the healing ministry was not his real mission, and was not sought for by him. He did not care for the publicity which it involved. He often told those who had been cured not to go round talking about it. Nevertheless, when the sick

found their way to his feet, or came boldly into his presence, his compassion was always so great that he attended to them.

CASTING OUT DEMONS

Many diseases, at that time, were thought to be caused by a devil or demon getting into the person, and exercising control over him; especially of course mental diseases. Demented persons were not put in homes for treatment in those days, and they seem to have flocked about Jesus. They recognized the power in which he spoke, and often saluted him as Messiah or Son of God. It was his practice to silence them, and many cures were effected. His success in these cases added greatly to his fame, and was conceded by his enemies.

It is well known to-day that mental illness often takes the form of the division of the personality into two, so that there seem to be two personalities in one body. They may even hate one another. One of them may claim to be a spirit or demon which has come in from outside. This condition is more common than is supposed, especially among less civilized people, who believe more simply in demons and spirits. There were many cases in Palestine at that time, and they were still to be found there two hundred years later, as we see in the Life of Herodion, a Palestinian hermit of that period. These people fully believed that their disturbed condition was due to an evil spirit that came into them, and spoke through their throat, and took command of their limbs. It was this spirit that shouted out at Jesus, not themselves. Jesus ordered the spirit to go out: "Be quiet!" he said on one occasion. "Go out of him." The spirit obeyed and the man came to himself.

It has been thought by some that Jesus himself must have believed that these were real devils that had somehow got into these unfortunate people; but this does not follow at all. One addresses a demented person in the terms of his illusion; one speaks to him just as if his illusion were true. Even to-day such people are cured by the laying on of hands in the Name of Jesus. The spirit is commanded to go out; it is spoken to

as if it were a demon that had come in from outside, exactly as the patient thinks. The patient may be right.

MIRACLES

There is no question that Jesus exercised an extraordinary power or influence over human beings who were in trouble, over the restless spirit, or the sick body, or the guilty mind. He was deeply moved himself when he was brought into touch with suffering or distress; his heart was "moved with compassion" for the common man. The meaning of the gospel was revealed in this mixture of tenderness and power. The action of the gospel is always through men; it passes from man to man. It is personal.

The power of Jesus to forgive and to heal and to save was something in excess of anything else that we know of in the history of the world. There are three examples that we may give. Once, when Jesus was crossing to the other side of the Lake with his disciples in the boat, a sudden storm came, and the disciples lost their nerve; they turned to Jesus and said, "Don't you care? we're sinking!" Jesus stood up and addressed the tempest; "Be quiet," he said, "Be silent!" and the wind dropped, and they were all terrified. Such is the story. They believed that their amazing skipper had stilled the storm.

When they arrived on the other side, he found himself confronted with a naked maniac who rushed upon him out of a cemetery, and hailed him as Son of God Most High. Jesus treated him calmly and asked him his name. "Armies," he said, "for there are many of us." He believed he was tormented by armies of devils. There was a herd of pigs feeding on the hillside, and the spirits who spoke through the man implored Jesus to be allowed to go into them; and it was believed that they did, for they all rushed over the cliff into the sea. The maniac was cured, the local inhabitants were amazed, but they did not want Jesus to stay.

Later on Jesus came back into the same country, and an important man, a synagogue ruler named Jairus, came to him,

and implored him to come and heal his little daughter who was dying. There was some delay over a woman who forced herself upon him to be healed; and when he got to the house, the child was dead. The mourners were lamenting wildly in the oriental manner. "She is not dead," Jesus said, "She is only asleep." He went into the room with Peter and James and John, and said in the native language, "Talitha Koum" (little girl, get up), and she rose from the bed and took food. She was about twelve years old.

In all these stories there is a way out, if we want to take it. Did Jesus really command the storm, or did it just happen? Did he send the spirits into the pigs, or did the excitement disturb the animals? Was the little girl really dead? Jesus said she was asleep. It is a curious fact that we are not exactly forced to believe these miracles to be miracles, unless we want to. Jesus did not do those great works in order to establish men's faith in the gospel, but because he had compassion. Jesus does not do signs and wonders to establish men's faith; but he does do signs and wonders where faith is.

When the question is asked whether Jesus worked miracles, everybody will answer according to his faith. I would say that he did nothing but miracles, for a miracle is something that excites our wonder, and I wonder at everything that he did and said; but a more down-to-earth direct answer is expected. That answer is that Jesus had an excess of personal and spiritual power, far beyond what can be established in the case of other men; he became famous first as a healer and caster-out of devils, much against his will; but he did not rely on these mighty works to establish faith in himself and his mission.

THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

We have already said that the Jewish Rabbis of the second century had a tradition that Jesus had been in Egypt, and learned magic. They also said that he was a magician and deceived the people. This was the official view of the Jews in the second century, and after, about Jesus of Nazareth,

so that their evidence supports the evidence of the gospels that he worked wonderful cures.

This critical attitude appears in the gospel too. The local religious leaders, the scribes and Pharisees, had been much disturbed by the claim of Jesus to have authority to forgive sins, and by his friendships with the disreputable classes, and by his disregard of their strict rules with regard to fast days and sabbaths. They reported the matter to the higher authorities in Jerusalem, and a delegation of experts from the holy city came down to Galilee to investigate. They fastened upon the most dramatic of his actions, his control of those unbalanced personalities who were believed to be possessed by devils. They said that he was in league with the devil himself; he cast out devils by the authority of "Beel-zebul," the lord of the devils; he was, in short, a magician or sorcerer.

These "scribes" were the experts in law and theology, which were one and the same thing in Israel at that time, and ever since. The word originally meant a man who could read and write, and then a man who was deeply versed in the details of the old scriptures, and especially the laws which they contained. He had been trained in a legal school, and could quote the opinions of great legal authorities, who were known as the "Elders". These Elders did not always agree, of course, for there were various schools of thought, of which the most famous were the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Scribes who opposed Jesus belonged to the Pharisee party, which was a very powerful one, and had a majority on the Sanhedrin, or supreme council of the nation.

Even the Pharisees did not agree among themselves, the two principal Pharisee schools being those of Hillel and Shammai. Hillel had been a great scholar, with a deep religious faith, and a broadminded outlook; his grandson Gamaliel was the tutor of St Paul, and advised the Sanhedrin not to persecute the disciples of Jesus. The Pharisees who opposed Jesus were a more narrow-minded group. All the Pharisees believed that the religion of Israel was best expressed in a system of laws and rules and regulations which would give directions for the whole conduct of life. The Law of

Moses gave great numbers of such laws and commandments, but the Pharisees had many more which they had received from the "Elders". Some of them were old customs; others were deduced from the words of Moses and the words of the Elders. Their control of these laws and customs gave them great power over the people. The evangelical religion of Jesus was bound to come into conflict with them.

FAST DAYS AND SABBATHS

We must now turn back to the scene in St Matthew's house at Capernaum. The men and women who were gathered there did not pay much attention to the rules and regulations of the scribes and Pharisees, and Jesus was sitting at a banquet, eating and drinking with them. We often find Jesus meeting people in this way. Many of his great sayings were given out over the bread and wine. People noted this. John the Baptist was a holy man, living apart from others, in the desert. Jesus loved social life; "he came eating and drinking," as they said; they called him a glutton and a drunkard. Even John was shocked.

The idea of religion in the minds of the scribes and Pharisees was based on the idea of holiness. If you kept all the laws and customs, you were holy and righteous, you were clean and pure, you could approach God. The Pharisee, in the parable of Jesus, felt sure of this; he was not as other men were, he fasted twice a week (Mondays and Thursdays), he gave God one-tenth of all he made, or produced on his farm, he was "righteous". On the other hand the poor publican had nothing to say for himself; he belonged to what the Pharisees called "the people of the land"; he was unholy and unclean and defiled, and the Pharisee would not mix with him.

Now the gospel of Jesus broke right through these distinctions; it brought the offer of forgiveness to all.

On the day of the celebrated banquet, or at another similar banquet, the disciples of John and of the Pharisees were observing a fast; which fast we do not know. Some of the Pharisees brought this to the attention of Jesus, and what he

said was very interesting: "Can the bridegroom's boys fast while the bridegroom is still with them? As long as he is with them they cannot fast. But the day will come when he is taken from them; and then they will fast—in that day." It was a rule that fasting was out of order at a wedding, and Jesus made a parable of this. The coming of the gospel into their lives was like a wedding day; it was no time for fasting. It was a time for joy. The new happy gospel religion which came into existence around God's Man conflicted with the old religion of rules and regulations.

The conflict was fundamental. No compromise was possible. That would be like patching an old worn-out garment with new unshrunk cloth; or pouring new-made wine into old wine-skins. The patch of new cloth would ruin the old garment; the ferment in the new wine would burst the old skins.

Mark appends two stories about the sabbath which illustrate the same principle. The disciples are blamed by the Pharisees for picking ears of wheat and eating them as they walk through the harvest-fields on the sabbath day; believe it or not, the sin lay in the picking and rubbing, which was regarded as labour. Jesus does not argue this point. He recalls how King David, his great ancestor, had gone into the temple of God, and fetched out the holy loaves which only the priests were allowed to eat, and given them to his young men when they were famished. God's own King had disregarded the rules and regulations when his young men were hungry.

It has been argued that the Bridegroom saying means that it is not reasonable to expect men to fast when they have good reason to be happy, and that the David saying means that we may disregard minor religious rules when people are in great need. These may be good inferences; but it is not at all clear whether that would have been the natural meaning for those who heard Jesus speak. He was speaking in terms of gospel; it was his own message and mission which superseded the old religion of law.

Both ideas are blended in the sayings with which this section concludes: "The sabbath was made for Man, not

Man for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath too."

The question of the sabbath became a serious subject of controversies, and there are several accounts of arguments in synagogues between Jesus and the religious authorities on this subject. It was on this subject, apparently, that the break occurred. Jesus gave up preaching in synagogues. The Pharisees began to make plans with the help of some of King Herod's adherents, to put him to death.

THE RULER OF THE DEVILS

It had to be admitted, however, that Jesus was gifted with a wonderful personal power, which was not from this world, and that he actually healed, and cast out demons. It was to explain these facts that the scribes from Jerusalem propounded the theory that this power was given him by the devils, and especially by Beelzebul, who they called the ruler of the devils.

In reply to this Jesus began by drawing a picture of the civil war that must be going on in the kingdom of the devils if this outrageous notion was taken seriously. He is not content with this, however. He speaks his mind about the perverted kind of theology which could look at the work he was doing, and call it evil; it was the work of the Holy Spirit, and they ought to know it.

He makes one of his great evangelical announcements at this point. All men's sins will be forgiven, he says in a striking paradox; and yet this one will not be forgiven. They could speak against him personally, they could speak wicked words against the Son of Man, and it would be forgiven them. But to speak against the Holy Spirit would not be forgiven; not for ever, he says in Mark; not in this age nor in the age to come, he says in "Q". Scholars say that we ought not to read into these words the western idea of eternity. The words may mean "for ages and ages". But perhaps we ought not actually to press them too closely for literal interpretations at all. The man who boasts that he has a religious background and

training, and yet cannot see the Spirit of God at work in a mission of forgiveness and healing and service of the unfortunate, is, as we say, beyond praying for. The stream of forgiveness cannot become effective in him, because he has denied it and blasphemed it. He "has no forgiveness" as Mark translates the saying.

Unfortunately history has many instances to show, in which the religious experts and authorities have taken the wrong side. The scribes and the Pharisees do not all come from Jerusalem.

5

The Kingdom of God

JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES

THERE came a time when Jesus took certain steps which had the effect of associating together his own followers and disciples as a separate religious group within the old Israel. The modern books often say that Jesus did not found a Church, and was indifferent to organization; but this statement is like so many other statements which are lightly repeated by one person or another; it is untrue. Jesus was a master-organizer. His organization has continued in existence down to the present day.

At some point or another Jesus gathered a great convocation of his disciples on a mountain, and chose twelve of them to be his general staff. On some other occasion, or perhaps on the same occasion, he held a convocation of disciples at which he instructed them in the laws of life which would guide the new form of the old religion; this was the famous Sermon on the Mount. Perhaps he did this more than once. We get the idea that there were several such convocations in the mountains of Galilee, or at some special mountain where he made his headquarters. The gospels always say "the mountain".

We cannot now discover the order of these events. The evangelists were not deeply concerned about their exact order, especially in their first stages. We shall have to do what they did, and take them in the order which best suits our way of expounding the whole story. We shall follow Matthew in taking the Sermon on the Mount first, for Mark

does not contain it at all. We shall then follow Mark in his arrangement of the choice and training of the twelve, for after all, Mark was following the teachings of Peter. Even this does not guarantee that his order is right, for Papias tells us that St John was not satisfied with it.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

We do not intend to give a theological definition of the master phrase "Kingdom of God", any more than we did of the master phrase "Son of Man"; but we can give a certain amount of help. In both cases the force and power really come out in their use in the actual situation. God's Kingdom is primarily the range of his whole sovereignty in heaven and earth; but for gospel purposes it is the power and glory of God operating among men through the Son of Man. For those who have eyes to see, it is not very far away.

In Daniel and in a few of the last Psalms, the Kingdom of God is the realization of his sovereignty upon earth through his saints, that is to say, through Israel. It means the rule of God among men upon the earth. In Daniel it is realized through the Son of Man, whose appearance symbolizes the coming of the Kingdom.

In the sayings of the Rabbis of the time of Jesus, it was used for the state of mind which is surrendered to the will of God. There was a prayer which every pious Jew said twice a day, and Jesus commended it to his followers as the greatest commandment in the whole Law. It is: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is One Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength". When the Jew repeated this, he was said to take upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of God. God's Kingdom was realized and made effective in him to that extent.

The phrase "Kingdom of God" is not used in an apocalyptic sense. It is never connected with the coming of the Messiah, or the end of the world. It is always used of God's power and glory in heaven and earth, and among his people, and in the human heart; that is to say, God as he exerts power

in creation and history and revelation and religious experience; which is all we know of God. The important word is not the word Kingdom, which implies power and lordship and rule and sovereignty, it is the word God which implies the supreme reality.

The gospel is about God and his Kingdom in act and in experience; but it does not call him King as the Hebrew prayers did. It calls him Father. The Hebrew prayers said:

> Blessed art thou our Father our King,
> *or*
> Blessed art thou King of the world.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray:

> Our Father, blessed be thy name
> Thy Kingdom come.

God's Kingdom is dynamic. It is thought of as "coming". It is coming upon us now at this instance of time; it is coming in the future with ever-increasing power and glory. It is for ever flowing in upon us in history, and in our daily life, and we are for ever entering into it. It is the supreme reality.

The words King and Father imply a relationship with a nation or with a family. Both words are symbols. God is not a King, or a Father, in any literal sense of the word; but the King seated on his Throne, and the father giving bread to his children, reflect something of his glory, as all men do in their natural or social relations. It is ordained, in the nature of things, that we can only talk about God in terms of human life, and the Son of Man who spoke about God's Kingdom taught us to call him Our Father.

Another symbol is the word Sky or Heaven.

HEAVEN

Matthew always speaks of the Kingdom of Heaven. This is simply a Jewish way of thinking. The Jews often said "heaven" when they meant "God"; it sounded more respectful.

On the other hand, it seemed to put God farther away;

"above the bright blue sky", as the old hymn said. There was a tendency in Judaism at this time, in the apocalypses and in the Rabbis, to think of God as far off. This way of thinking has been caricatured in a modern phrase as the Three-Storey Universe; as if God was above the bright blue sky, man down upon the earth, and hell underneath it. This kind of thinking, if it ever existed among the devout, was entirely smashed by the gospel. The gospel brings God's Kingdom into immediate contact with men through Christ; it brings him right into the heart of the man who believes in him. It is true that it speaks of "Our Father in heaven" but that is a necessary and wonderful piece of symbolism. God is in heaven, and the heavens declare his glory; but this God who is in the heavens is in our hearts too, as we pray to him.

Hence Jesus can say, "God's Kingdom is within you", or "has come upon you", or "is at hand".

THE OUR FATHER

The vision of God's Kingdom is given in a very short form in the Lord's Prayer; shorter even than the form which is generally used in the churches; and in Luke we find it is shorter even than in Matthew:

In Matthew	*In Luke*
Our Father in the heavens: Blessed be thy Name.	Father: Blessed by thy Name
Thy Kingdom come.	Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done: As in heaven so upon earth.	
Give us to-day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts: Even as we have forgiven our debtors.	Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins: For we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us,
And do not lead us into temptation: But deliver us from the evil.	And lead us not into temptation.

No doubt Jesus gave it more than once; it was in common use; and not necessarily in exactly the same words every time.

We notice that it begins at the highest point and comes down to the lowest. It begins with the Name of God and ends with the power of evil or of the evil one. We speak of high and low because that is the natural symbolism of worship and of the inner life. We have the picture of God in the heavens, but as we pray, our thought comes down, step by step, to the earth. The word which we have translated "blessed" means "sanctified" or "made holy"; it suggests the vision which Isaiah saw, of the worship of the angels in the temple of God, and their anthem, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts: heaven and earth is full of thy glory." Then follows the prayer for the coming of the Kingdom, and the doing of God's will, on earth as it is in heaven; but in the language of liturgy, heaven does not mean the bright blue sky, though that symbol is made use of; it means the Other-world of power and glory, which is so close in to this one in which we live.

We are now on the level of the earth, that is to say, of this life. We pray for our daily bread; though, truth to tell, the scholars are not sure how to translate the Greek adjective. "Daily" is a very old translation which we adopted from the Latin Bible. The Syrians say "bread for to-morrow". The symbol, or picture, on which it is built, is that of the manna which was given to Israel every day in the desert, always just enough for the day. The word "bread" is meant to stand for all our needs.

Then we come closer in to ourselves. We think of our sins; but we are not to pray for forgiveness unless we have forgiven those who we think have done us wrong, and therefore owe us something. This is the only condition for our own forgiveness which is ever mentioned in the gospel. The Christian ought not to begin to pray if he still has any hard feelings in his heart against another.

Then we come lower and deeper. We face temptation. Temptation stands for any of those seasons of trial or doubt or affliction which try and test the soul: disaster, sickness,

death, or even more the temptation to do evil; and on that word the prayer stops. There are two powers in the soul, therefore, with which the believer has to reckon: the power of God, to whom we say, "Give us, forgive us, lead us, preserve us"; and the power of evil which is our great enemy, the power which Jesus called Satan.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

A more extended treatment of God's Kingdom is given in the Sermon on the Mount. It is not given in the form of doctrine or theology, it is given in the form of spiritual Law, a Law from God, more searching and heroic than the old Law; and not to be taken literally, as it was. There are two versions of the Sermon on the Mount, a long one in Matthew and a short one in Luke. The one in Matthew was longer in any case, but he has lengthened it further by adding other sayings of Jesus where they are helpful and appropriate; Luke has some of these additional sayings, but has not put them in the Sermon on the Mount. If we put the two versions side by side, we get a good idea of the original outline and content.

A great crowd of disciples is present, and Jesus opens with benedictions, which is the very opposite of our church procedure. In Luke we read, "Blessed are you who are poor", but in Matthew, "Blessed are the poor in spirit", for yours is the Kingdom of God. In Luke it is the poor, the mournful, and the hungry, who are blessed, and no doubt Jesus said this; in Matthew it is the poor in spirit, the mournful, and those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and no doubt Jesus meant this. The word poor is used in the Psalms for the humble and the faithful. A century later the persecuted Jewish Christians were known by this name: "Ebionite", the poor and afflicted. We have to get accustomed to the fact that we have not got the exact words of Jesus. What we have got is better; we have his words as they went on being taught by his disciples in the church; sometimes with a word or two of explanation. And as we have two accounts of them, or even more, we are very fortunate indeed.

Matthew has more blessings (or "beatitudes") than Luke; but both end up in the same way: "Blessed are *you*", he says, "when men insult you and persecute you and speak evil against you because of me; Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is great in heaven; for that is how their fathers treated the prophets." So when Jesus speaks these words, the conflict was already growing intense. Those who follow him are going to suffer for his sake.

THE LAW FOR CHRISTIANS

In Matthew Jesus now says something about the Law of Moses. He has been accused of trying to destroy it, but he denies that. He has not come to destroy but to fulfil. He says that the Law of Moses will stand for ever. No letter or part of a letter will ever pass away; that is to say, it all has its meaning and significance; and he goes on to illustrate what he means, by taking five separate commandments and expounding them. In every case the outward literal meaning yields place to an inward spiritual one; it is not just the act of murder that constitutes the sin, it is the hatred hidden in the heart; it is not merely adultery, it is the wicked eye; and so forth. Luke has none of this teaching; perhaps he thought that the gentile did not need it. If so, Matthew knew better; the gentile could make very good use of it.

We now come to the heart of the matter, and this, of course, is found in both evangelists. It begins, exactly, like the Lord's Prayer, by ruling out revenge and evil thoughts. You must love your enemy; you must pray for the man who persecutes you; you must do good deeds to those who hate you. Such thoughts had appeared here and there in the world's literature before; but never had they been so clearly thought out, or expressed in such fulness and strength. The words of Jesus are always a kind of poetry; they are expressed in short rhythmical sentences, and in poetic language, which can be easily visualized; they are like music or art, not like logic or science. They are short and sharp; and yet they seem to magnify their subject. They are easy to learn by heart.

An extraordinary picture emerges at this point. It is that of reversed retaliation, or upside-down revenge. He speaks of someone who is assailed with curses and insults but retaliates with blessings and prayers. He is slapped on the face, and turns the other cheek. His outer mantle or blanket is torn from him, and he at once surrenders his shirt. He is forced to carry a burden for a mile, and willingly labours on for another.

What we see here is not a new code of ethics or form of legislation, it is the poor persecuted Christian in the hands of his enemies, who are the scribes and judges and officers of the law. And now we can see what Jesus meant when he said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of God." They belong to it now.

But he has an even stronger word of comfort. They are true sons of God. The character of God is revealed in them; for God is kind and generous without distinction. He puts up with the ungracious and unthankful; he makes the sun rise for the evil as well as the good; his rain falls for the unrighteous as well as for the righteous. In the words of an old Jewish saying, he is no respecter of persons. The idea that the good and righteous man suffering wrongfully is thereby marked as God's servant, or God's son, or the image of God himself, was not totally new. The human mind had glimpsed the idea before. The noblest expression of it is to be found in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, where the Servant of the Lord suffers many things, and bears the sins of others. It is the subject of chapters 4 and 5 of the Wisdom of Solomon. Outside of Israel, it appeared in old myths and rituals; every year, on his coronation day, the King of Babylon went through a ceremony in the temple of Marduk, in which he was struck on the face, unclothed, and humiliated in various ways; it is probable that he went through a mock death and resurrection before he was re-clothed, re-crowned, and restored to his people.

The Law, as it is made perfect for the disciples of Jesus, turns out to be no law at all, in the ordinary sense of the word; but a supernatural vision of unconquerable grace and love,

expressed for them in terms which had been anticipated in ancient prophecies and psalms and myths and rituals, all of which had some glimmering of the truth.

CONCLUSION OF THE SERMON

The principle of reversed retaliation is expressed in a variety of forms. It is interesting to see these counsels of Jesus as they were taught to the Christians in Rome at the end of the century: "Show mercy that you may receive mercy; forgive, that you may be forgiven; as you do, so shall it be done unto you; as you judge, so shall you be judged; as you act with kindness, so shall you be treated with kindness; the measure that you measure with, you shall be measured with yourself." Measure for measure is the key to this kind of thinking. This little outline of the teaching was given by Clement of Rome in his Epistle, written about A.D. 96. The Roman church had received it from the apostles or their disciples; the fact that they had such teaching explains why Mark did not have to include it in the gospel which he wrote for them.

This kind of teaching is all summed up in the "Golden Rule": "Do unto others as you would wish them to do unto you"; a step beyond the advice of Rabbi Hillel, which was *not* to do to others what you did *not* wish them to do to you. Throughout this course of teaching, Jesus seems to take up and make perfect the best of the old wisdom and teaching, which is what he said he would do, according to Matthew. He had not come to destroy but to fulfil.

Certain warnings and cautions are given at the end. The path of life is narrow and difficult, and few there are that find it. There are false prophets about, but you can distinguish them by their lives; a good tree bears good fruits; do you get grapes off thorn-bushes or figs off thistles? It is not enough to sing the praises of Jesus and call him by high-sounding titles; it is necessary to do the will of God. "Why do you keep on calling me Lord, and don't do what I tell you?" He ends with a parable. The man who hears him, and does what he says, is like a man who built his house well and

truly on a good foundation of rock; the river rose, and the flood came and beat upon it, and it stood. The man who hears but does not do, is like the man who built his house on the sand without a proper foundation; the river rose, the floods came and beat upon it, and it collapsed; and what a ruin it was!

THE CHOICE OF THE TWELVE

We cannot help noticing now that Jesus does not speak so much in terms of doctrines or codes or morality taken from a book, as in terms of some actual flesh-and-blood situation. We see God's Kingdom in the faithful disciple at prayer, or in the faithful disciple suffering for righteousness' sake. We see it in Jesus himself as he speaks and acts among his disciples; it expands, as it were, from him into the circle of those who believe in him. God's Kingdom among men is a royal relationship with those who believe in him through the Son of Man.

This kingdom among men is given an outward form or expression in the family of twelve men, whom Jesus chose to be with him, and to share his authority in the gospel. According to Mark the formation of this group followed his break with the synagogue authorities on the subject of healing on the sabbath. He was in a synagogue; there was a man there with a withered hand, waiting for healing, and there was a group of Pharisees watching him to see if he would do it on the sabbath day. Jesus made the man stand up where everyone could see him; then he turned on the Pharisees with anger; he knew what was in their minds. "Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath day?" he asked them, "Or to do evil? To save a life or to kill?" They dared not make any answer, for everyone knew that there was murder in their hearts. Jesus healed the man, and the Pharisees went out and began to make their plans to destroy him.

It was after this, Mark and Matthew say, that Jesus withdrew. He did not work through the synagogue any more. He met with an enormous crowd by the side of the Lake, and worked many cures; then he went up into a Mountain, and chose his twelve disciples from a number of others.

Matthew combines this story with the story of their sending; Luke combines it with the Sermon on the Mount; only Mark makes a separate event of it, and it surely must have been a separate event. We shall return to it in another chapter. Here we only want to say that Jesus passed on his evangelical authority to the twelve, and ministered to the believers through them. The power of God that was working in his evangelical mission was no longer confined to him alone; it expanded and ramified through the apostolate into a community, which he was shaping and forming to be its outward expression among men. A word was found for it before long; it was the Church.

This Church of Jesus was the old Israel in a new form. He marked this by the adoption of the number twelve, which was taken from the twelve tribes of Israel. When Moses was on Mount Sinai, he had the twelve tribes appoint leaders or princes to represent them; and Jesus says to his apostles, "Ye shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." They are the princes of the new people of God through whom God's Kingdom comes into being on earth.

THE PARABLES

This leads us to a third way in which Jesus spoke about the Kingdom; it was the method of parables. Parables are much misunderstood in our modern western world. They are a kind of poetry. They are meant to surprise and please and touch the imagination. They present truth in visual form like pictures. They are a picture-language.

This language is the natural language of religion. Religion talks about invisible realities, but it talks in visual images, or it expresses itself in outward acts and signs. We kneel, we bow the head, we call God our Father (though he is not a father), we say "Hallowed be thy Name" (though he has no name), and so forth, but these things help us to see and know God. Isaiah's wonderful vision in the temple is expressed in terms of visual images and church music. He sees the Lord high and lifted up (but God is not high or lifted up). He sees

him sitting on a throne (but God does not sit on any throne). Seraphs (whatever they are) sing an anthem: "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, Lord God Almighty: heaven and earth are full of thy GLORY."

Such acts, such words, such music, help us to see God's glory for ourselves. That is their function. But some do not see God at all; and that was Isaiah's problem. They look and look but cannot see, they hear and hear but cannot understand. He thinks it is wilful, he thinks it is some defect deep down in the heart; they do not want to be converted, they do not want to be forgiven, they do not want to have to change their lives.

But some do see God (though God cannot be seen), they do hear and understand (though God cannot be understood), and of such are the kingdom of God. "Blessed are your eyes, for you see," Jesus says, and "Blessed are your ears, for you hear." After the parable of the Sower, he says, "The Mystery of God's Kingdom is given to you; but it all comes in parables to those who are outside"; and then he quotes the words of Isaiah about those who look and look and never see. Now these are strange words, and many people cannot understand them, or do not like them; but they are words of Jesus nevertheless. His words are sometimes strange, sometimes terrifying, always beautiful, always profound. We must never be content with their literal meaning; and we cannot expect to understand them all at once.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

This does not mean that no help can ever be given to people who are puzzled by the words of Jesus; but it does mean that progress may be slow, and that there will always be more truth to find out. In order to help his disciples he began their instruction with the very simple parable of the Sower. The gospel which he preaches is like handfuls of seed which are scattered on the earth; there is a mysterious life in them which the eye cannot see. A miracle takes place. The seed germinates in the earth; it takes root and springs up and

multiplies and produces more seed, thirty times as much, sixty times as much, a hundred times as much. It is a miracle for those who have eyes to see it.

The words of Jesus fall into the good soil of the pure heart; they grow up in the person; they bear fruit in his life. In good works, does he mean? In doing the will of God? In character? In power? In understanding? In endurance? In faith? In eternal life perhaps? All that is left open. The gospel has a miraculous power in it which takes root in the heart of the hearer and imparts life to him.

This is only the beginning. The seed parable has more to teach us than that. Jesus helps us to do so. He adds another seed parable; but his thought shifts now to the idea of God's Kingdom. God's Kingdom is like seed, which a man sows. The man goes away and sleeps and wakes night and day; meanwhile the seed grows, *he doesn't know how*, first the stalk, then the ear, then the ear full of grain, then the harvest. A thousand things are in this beautiful picture. God introduces his Kingdom into this world according to the manner in which he creates everything. There is no shouting or noise or blowing on trumpets. A man comes along sowing seed, night follows day, spring follows winter, the harvest grows through its appointed stages, God has appointed the times and the seasons . . . presently the harvest comes.

A third seed parable follows. It is like a very small seed, the smallest of all seeds, the mustard seed; but it grows up and puts out big branches and the birds can build their nests in it. So it is with the gospel of God that Jesus has brought into Galilee, and so it is with the Kingdom of God which is verily and indeed working among men through his person and ministry; it looks so small compared with the great empires of the earth, but it will outgrow them all and outlast them all.

There are many more thoughts which will occur to the mind as one allows the words of Jesus to take root and grow in it; but there is one in particular that would be well understood at that time, though it might not occur to anyone to-day. The seed that was cast into the earth, and the harvest sheaf that was cut down in the summer, had a sacred meaning

in the poetry of the ancient world in tales about their kings and gods. It meant man himself who was cut down by death, and laid in the earth; dead and buried and yet predestined to rise again. St John and St Paul give these interpretations: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it remains solitary; but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit" (John 12.24). "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not made to live unless it die . . ." (1 Corinthians 15.36).

And to this we may add the words of St Clement of Rome who was a young man at the time when the gospels were being written: "Let us see, my beloved, how the resurrection comes about at its season. . . . The Sower went forth and cast upon the earth each one of his seeds, which fell upon the earth dry and bare and were dissolved; then, out of dissolution, the majesty of the Lord's providence raises them up, and out of the one many more increase and bear fruit" (1 Clement 24.5).

The Seed is Life, and so is the Gospel, and so is the Kingdom: eternal Life.

THE KINGDOM IN THE FUTURE

There is still another way in which Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God, and this had to do with the future, when the present troubles and trials had been passed through. Then the Kingdom would come in power and glory, he said. This is a kind of poetry, which is called "apocalypse". When we speak of the future, we can only do so in a very general way, or else in symbols and figures of speech. Jesus spoke in glorious figures of speech about the triumphant coming of God's Kingdom in the future. It was always "coming", as it made its way into human hearts and lives through the gospel; but its future coming would be more glorious still. Matthew makes much of these poetic sayings about the glory of the Kingdom in the future. He has splendid "apocalyptic" parables.

Christians have always differed in their interpretation of these prophetic passages; and in all ages literal-minded men have constructed fantastic theories out of them about the "end of the world", and have professed that it was to come in their time. Even great scholars have been unable to see that Jesus was talking about spiritual things. They look at it, and look at it, and cannot see it. It is not always very easy to see.

No doubt there will be many sayings of Jesus which we cannot understand now, or enter into without prolonged prayer and thought; but as we go on he will give us more light, and we will see that the words which he speaks are spirit and are truth.

6

The Bread of Heaven

THE HOUSEHOLD OF JESUS

As we read the gospels at this point, we are watching the creation of a new movement within the old Israel, which grew into what we call the Christian Church; but the word is only found twice in the gospels, and it is possible that Jesus did not use it himself. He made use of a word which meant a family or household; it was the word "beth" which means a house, but in Israel, the word "house" was freely used of any organized religious group; the school of a great Rabbi was called his house or family; it was their natural way of speaking.

In some ways the household of Jesus was like one of the Rabbinic schools. His followers were called disciples, and he was called Rabbi (or teacher). The word "Rabbi" was a title of great respect which was applied to the most learned and influential of the Jewish teachers; the word "disciple" simply means a pupil or learner. Its use was not confined to the twelve. All the followers of Jesus could be called disciples. They were all students in his school.

At first the twelve were simply called The Twelve; but before long a distinguishing title was found for them too. They were called Apostles, men sent out with authority to represent their master. None of them were ever called Rabbi. There was only one Rabbi or master or teacher in the household, and that was Jesus.

Jesus gave some of his twelve Apostles new names; indeed he may have given them all new names. The giving of a new name was a sign of honour in Israel, and marked the beginning of a new life of consecration to the service of God. Abraham was given his new name when he was called by God to be the father of the faithful; Jacob was given the name of Israel as the father of the twelve tribes; Hoshea, the servant of Moses, was given the title of Joshua, when he was called to be his successor, and appointed as such with the laying on of hands. It is the Hebrew form of the name Jesus, and means "The Lord saves".

Simon was given the name of Peter (or Kephas in Aramaic) which means the Stone; a stone on which the church or house of Jesus could be built. He was the leader and spokesman of the twelve. James and John were given the name "Boanerges", which is said to mean "Sons of Thunder"; we do not understand this name, but the two brothers seem to have been of a rather fiery and impetuous disposition.

Fourth on the list (or second in some forms of it) comes the fisherman Andrew. Then come Philip and Bartholomew, then Thomas and Matthew. Andrew and Philip are Greek names, and the two men were friends. Thomas means the twin. Matthew was the new name given to Levi the publican; it means Gift of God. Then comes another James, who was called James the son of Alphaeus in order to distinguish him. Then Judas, who is called Thaddaeus, probably to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot; Judas and Thaddaeus (Theudas) are forms of the same name, which means Praise. Then another Simon who was called the Zealot or Cananaean, the name of a political party which was in favour of war against the Romans; he must have been another fiery character. Lastly, Judas Iscariot; Iscariot may mean Ish Kerioth, the man from Kerioth, a village in Judaea, or it may mean Sicarius, the assassin.

In the pictures and church windows these pupils of Jesus are often represented as aged men with grey hair and beards;

but that cannot have been the case. Jesus was not much over thirty himself, and his pupils were younger. We should think of them as being in their twenties, or younger still; John lived for another sixty years. They were men of ability and enthusiasm, but they had much to learn, and they made many mistakes.

THE MISSION OF THE TWELVE

A day came when Jesus gathered them together, and sent them out to preach the gospel of the Kingdom; they were also to heal the sick and cast out demons. It was a first stage in their training, and a means by which Jesus kept in touch with his followers in the various villages where he had preached. They were to go out trusting entirely in God. They were to make no provision for the journey; they were to take no money, and no more clothes than they stood up in. They wore sandals, not shoes, and they had a staff in their hand; or, according to one account of it, they did not even have a staff. They were to go two by two. This tradition was never forgotten, and you will notice it in the Acts of the Apostles: Peter and John, Barnabas and Paul, Paul and Silas, Paul and Timothy. It was not always so, but it seems to have been the general rule. Two evangelists are better than one.

In every town or village there was a Christian family where they could get hospitality, and make their head-quarters. They were not to change from one house to another. This family, or household, was really the local Church. Later on, in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St Paul, we read of Churches in the household of some believer. It is believed that the first Christian Churches began in this way. Some wealthy believer allowed his house to be used as a church; it became the house of God.

The two Apostles saluted the house with the usual Jewish greeting, "Peace be upon you"; it is what one Jew says to another to-day when he meets him. If the family would take them in, they went in and stayed, and the peace of God was upon that house. If nobody would take them in, they stood

in the street, took off a sandal, shook off the dust of the place, and said, "All the same, the Kingdom of God is coming". This is one of the outward signs used in the gospel movement; it meant that they had finished with that town, they would not even take its dust away with them.

They announced the Kingdom, they called men to repentance, they cast out demons in the name of Jesus, they anointed the sick with oil and healed them.

We see here the beginning of the Christian ministry which is a creation of Jesus Christ, like the gospel and the sacraments which he committed to them. His own divine mission was infused into them and extended more widely through them; he gave them that "authority" from God which he exercised himself in his preaching and in his acts of healing and forgiveness. "He that receiveth you receiveth me," he said, "and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me"; and later on, after the resurrection, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you"; and again, "Behold I am with you every day even unto the end of the world."

THE MARTYRDOM OF JOHN

Another reason for this mission may have been the death of John the Baptist. Herod's wife had got her way, and the Baptist had been beheaded in his prison by order of King Herod. The whole disgraceful story is told by Mark in his sixth chapter; and the news of it must have spread dismay throughout the nation, for everybody regarded John as a real prophet, sent from God. His followers would look to Jesus now, and Matthew says that after they had buried their master, his leading disciples came to Jesus. Jesus may have sent out his disciples on their mission to comfort the people, and to assure them that the great religious movement which he had begun would be carried on.

All through the gospel story, the figure of John the Baptist stands in the background; and now his death casts a dark shadow upon it. The thought of death is in everybody's mind. Before long Jesus will be telling them that they must all be

ready to die for the sake of the Kingdom of God. It will be his own destiny too. That is how God's Kingdom is to come.

This fact may help to explain why such crowds of people came to Jesus in the desert. The Twelve came back and made their reports of what they had done and taught. Jesus advised them to come away with him into a desert place, so that they could be free from the crowds, and have quiet and refreshment. They went off in the boat, but the crowds followed them along the lake-shore. They found about five thousand of them when they disembarked at the foot of the mountain. St John tells us what was in their mind. They wanted to make Jesus their King instead of Herod; but that was not what Jesus wanted; but he had compassion on them because they had lost their shepherd. He spoke to them, and they listened all day, until the sun began to sink. What he said, we are not told, but they were ready to go quietly away to their homes.

Now follows one of the most important scenes in the whole gospel. Jesus does not want to send them away without feeding them, for many of them have come from a distance, and have a long way to go. The Twelve have nothing in the boat but five loaves of bread and two small fishes. Jesus commands them to recline in parties of a hundred, or fifty, on the green grass; like flower-beds, it says in the Greek text of Mark, though these words have never been translated literally into English. The story is told in this vivid picturesque way because the scene remained so clear in the minds of those who were there; besides, it recalled the much-loved twenty-third psalm:

> The Lord is my shepherd, therefore shall I lack nothing:
> He maketh me lie down in green pastures:
> He leadeth me beside still waters . . .
> Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
> I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.

He takes the bread, he looks up to heaven, he utters a blessing over it according to the Hebrew custom, he breaks it, and gives it to the disciples to distribute. Everybody is satisfied.

This is the greatest miracle of the gospel story, and many people have tried to work out "natural" explanations for it. Perhaps the people did have food with them, and when the apostles contributed their small store of food, they were shamed into producing theirs. For the story is so real, and so well supported by the evidence, that it has to be accepted as a historical event, even by those who cannot accept the miracle. And there was something about it that was even more important than the question of the miracle. There was something in it, Mark says, which the disciples failed to understand. Just as the parables had an inward meaning which they failed to understand, so the breaking of the bread had an inward meaning which they failed to understand. It was what we call a sacrament.

The crowds had gone out into the desert to see John, and he had given them the sacrament of water; when they went out into the desert to see Jesus, he gave them the sacrament of the broken bread. He said no word when he gave it; but it was a holy act. It created what was called a covenant between them. It was the Passover season; and exactly a year later, at the next Passover, he completed the sacrament, and when he gave them the broken bread, he said: "This is my body: this is me, myself."

THE BREAD OF LIFE

In St John's gospel, we have a full explanation of the inner meaning. We have already said that St John does not confine himself to reporting the actual words of Jesus; he was inspired to expand and paraphrase them, so as to bring out the inward meaning of his mysterious sayings and acts. In the sixth chapter of St John, Jesus has little to say about this miracle as a miracle; there was something more important than the bread which satisfied men's hunger; it was the bread of eternal life, which the Son of Man would give them. And

what was the bread of life? It was the Son of Man himself, who came down from heaven to give life to the world; whoever believed in him would have eternal life, and would be raised up from the dead at the last day. This bread was his flesh which he would give for the life of the world; and unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

St John has used his wisdom and discretion, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in arranging these words of Jesus in this way; and he does so in the light of his own knowledge of Jesus, and all that he had found him to be. Nobody in Galilee could be expected to understand so much at this time. But what they could be expected to see was this; that the heart of the gospel was not what Jesus said, or even what Jesus did, but it was Jesus himself. He gave himself for them, and that is why he came into the world.

To the believer this is quite simple; to the unbeliever it seems almost impossible to understand.

THE STORM

That night was the occasion of a second great miracle. He sent away the crowds, and went up into the mountain to be alone with God and to pray. The disciples were in the boat, and they were having a rough passage because of a headwind. Two or three hours before dawn, they saw him walking over the water. As they watched him, it looked as if he meant to walk alongside of the boat. They gave a cry of alarm, but he spoke to them: "Don't be afraid," he said, "It is I myself." And then he came right up into the boat.

There are no other stories quite like these two, which take place within twenty-four hours at this high point in the gospel story. There is the story of the feeding of the four thousand, of course, but many scholars think this is just another account of the feeding of the five thousand; that is a matter of opinion. There is the withering of the barren fig-tree, which we shall come to in due course, and John's story of the changing of water into wine at Cana of Galilee. They

are what are called nature miracles; not great acts of healing on human minds or bodies, but actions in which Jesus commands nature. Those who believe that he is the Son of God will be able to accept them because they believe it; but, as we have said, they do not create faith; we believe them because it is given us to believe.

Luke omits the story of the walking on the water, but Matthew adds something to it, the attempt of Peter to walk on the water. But his faith failed him; he began to sink, and needed the support of Jesus to recover himself. Some scholars think that this addition is more of a parable than a miracle, and means that we must have faith in God in order to walk over the waters of this troublesome life. Perhaps it is.

We are obliged to consider the question of these great miracles from all points of view, but I would like to offer two points for consideration. The first is that perhaps the miracles are not so important, one way or the other; they give glory to the message of the gospel, but they are not the message of the gospel. If they rather confound us, perhaps that is what they were intended to do. The story remains, for the most part, within the limitations of a human life, but every now and then, something happens which is beyond our comprehension, and we call this a miracle. But actually it is all beyond our comprehension. No other man has ever spoken or acted as he did, or impressed the world in the same way. His whole life is miracle. The fact that you are reading this book about him now is the real proof of it. His power over the hearts of men from that day to this is greater than any miracle. We do not believe in Jesus because he did miracles; we believe in miracles because we believe in him. Faith in him comes first.

Jesus did not do miracles in order to make people believe in him. He refused to give the Pharisees a "sign from heaven" when they demanded it. The greatest miracles were done among the faithful, not before the general public. It is not said that the five thousand knew that a miracle had been done. It is not said that they were all amazed and glorified God. What is said is that Jesus dismissed them to their homes

at once. They went off in the gathering darkness after receiving the bread of the eucharist from his hand. The great convocation in the desert was over. They had learned to trust in God the Father through the Son of Man.

He told his disciples not to be anxious or worried about what they would have to eat or drink; they were to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things would be added.

There is a charming word of Jesus in this passage. It is all one word: "Littlefaith." It is not meant unkindly. I would like to be called Littlefaith by Jesus. A little faith is a good thing to have. Jesus said that if you have faith as little as a grain of mustard seed, you will be able to say to that mountain, "up with you, and be hurled into the sea," and it will be done for you. Another of his strange grand sayings, not to be taken literally.

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN

They landed at Gennesareth, and were met again by the crowds. They made a triumphal tour through the villages. He went into no synagogues now, but the crowds came out with their sick. The Pharisees were there too, and there was an important dispute about clean and unclean. The Pharisees believed they must perform certain ritualistic washings when they came home from business, or before meals, in case they had touched anything unclean and unholy; the disciples of Jesus did not do this. In this important pronouncement Jesus declared that customs of this sort, which were derived from the teachings of the "Elders", were obscuring the greater laws which God had given through Moses. As we read through these sayings of Jesus, we can distinguish two principal thoughts. One is that the Pharisees neglected the greater in order to perform the lesser; the other is that they neglected the inward in order to perform the outward. They washed the outside of the cup or jug, while it was all filthy inside. They strained the gnat out of their cup of wine, and swallowed down the camel. They were forever adjusting their

outward actions and gestures and ornaments; they forgot about the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and truth. They were like actors taking a part. The word "hypocrite" is a Greek word which means a play-actor, and that is what Jesus called them; not "hypocrites" in our sense of the word, but play-actors.

Their mistake was made by thinking too much about externals. Externals are very important; "These things you ought to have done," Jesus says; but real religion must begin in the heart of man, and then the rest will follow. Nothing which comes from outside a man makes him unclean or unholy before God; what makes a man unclean or unholy comes from within him, his evil thoughts and desires which are the source of all the evils in the life of man. Positively, this lays down the principle that good and evil are spiritual things; and negatively it does away with the idea that there can be anything evil or wrong in such external things as food and drink.

AMONG THE GENTILES

When the Apostles thought this out at a later date, they saw that this principle meant that there was no distinction of clean and unclean between the Jews and the gentiles; there was no spiritual defilement for them in mixing with the gentiles and eating and drinking with them. Jesus did not take the gospel to the gentile world himself, but he went with his disciples to the gentile city of Tyre, to have a holiday, and get the rest which they had tried in vain to find in the desert. He wanted to escape attention there; but a gentile woman, a Syrian Greek, followed him down the streets, crying out after him. Her daughter was ill, and she believed that Jesus could heal her. This story is a very important one, since she is one of the very few gentiles who appear in the gospels.

There is a story which comes after the Sermon on the Mount, of an officer in the Roman army, a "centurion" or captain, whose boy was very ill. He did not expect Jesus to come into his house, though Jesus was willing to do so. He had noticed how Jesus cast out the demons with a word of

command, and he thought that was all that was necessary. "When I tell a soldier to come, he comes; and when I tell him to go, he goes; and when I say to my batman, Do this, he does it." Jesus was amazed at his faith; he said he had seen nothing like it in Israel, and the boy was healed from that hour. But he did not actually go into a gentile house. So it was with the woman of Tyre.

It is a hard story for those who have no sense of humour, and we will try to clear it up by a free translation. The woman comes flying after him with exaggerated titles of respect, "My lord, your highness" (she called him son of David), "do have pity on me." The disciples were shocked. It was not only that she was a gentile; she was a woman, and Jewish women were not as uninhibited as this, though indeed here and there one of them forced herself upon him, and shocked everyone by doing so. Jesus turned to his disciples and says, "Was I only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel?"—not a very polite way of describing the Israelites. Still she followed; and he turned to her and said, "Allow the children to be fed first; is it right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs?" Of course he did not mean it seriously; but many a Jewish Rabbi would have meant it seriously; and the disciples may have taken it so. The woman knew better; she replied in the same vein: "Yes," she said, "it is; the poor little dogs under the table do get some of the children's crumbs." Jesus was delighted. Her daughter was healed from that hour.

Grave theologians take this conversation seriously, and ponder over its meaning. It is supposed to be one of the hard sayings of Jesus, whereas it is a very easy one. The Jews did sometimes call the gentiles dogs. They did sometimes exclude them from the mercies of God. Jesus and this woman could laugh at that idea. And incidentally there would have been no dogs under a Jewish table, they were unclean animals; but this was a gentile woman who liked dogs, and Jesus was prepared to like them too. He was fully human. He understood people. And he had a sense of humour which ordinary people liked. We have to use our sense of humour, too, sometimes,

in reading about him. That is partly what is meant by the title "Son of Man". He was not always talking theology; perhaps he was very seldom talking theology. He was just being himself.

FURTHER TRAVELS

The feeding of the five thousand had taken place at the feast of the Passover, which is our Christian Easter, coming in March or April. It was in part a harvest festival, for the first sheaf of the barley harvest was cut a day or two later, and offered in the temple; and John says that the five loaves which Jesus blessed were loaves of barley. The wheat harvest came later, and was marked by the festival which we call Whitsun or Pentecost; fifty days later. Jesus spent some of these days resting in the seaside cities of Tyre and Sidon. He returned from Sidon by a roundabout way, and found himself on the other side of the lake again, in the country called Decapolis, which was not part of the territory ruled over by Herod; and Mark places the feeding of the four thousand here.

We have mentioned that many scholars think they are two accounts of the same event; but it is possible that Jesus held another assembly of followers on the feast of Pentecost. The stories are very alike, it is true, but this might happen in the course of telling them. Some scholars think that the five thousand represents Jesus breaking bread for the Jewish nation, and the four thousand represents him breaking bread for the gentile world, since there were many gentiles in Decapolis; but the evidence for this is rather shadowy. Probably he was in Decapolis because he was safe there from Herod of Galilee.

Mark has two interesting stories of healing, one before, and one after this event. A man was brought to him who was deaf, and could not speak properly. Jesus took him on one side. It was no good talking to him, so he resorted to gestures. He put his fingers into his ears; he spit and touched his tongue; he looked up to heaven; he sighed or groaned; he uttered a deep audible breath and said, "Ephphatha", which

means, "Be opened". The man was cured. He could hear and speak properly. But Jesus told him not to go round talking about it. He did not want more of the crowds who just came to see these deeds of healing, and had no further interest.

The story gives us another word of Jesus in the Aramaic tongue, as he spoke it; a short word of command like many others; but it also shows the loving care with which he treated the poor man. It was not merely a word of command by any means; it seemed to take all the bodily powers he had to effect the cure, and what is more, it looks as if he was exploring or manipulating the man's ears and tongue like a doctor. Perhaps there was more of this than we are told about in the gospels. Perhaps he used medical knowledge and skill.

There is another point, however. The dispute with the Pharisees brought out the point that the inward condition of the man's heart is more important than his outward acts, and that religion must begin there; but all these stories of bread broken in the desert, and sick men healed through the touch of Jesus' hands, are meant to show us how important outward acts and gestures are. The inward power expresses itself in these sacramental acts, it uses every kind of outward and visible sign. It naturally must; for the outward and the inward are the same thing. One of the greatest of Anglican theologians, the late Bishop Gore, used to say, "The body is not a different thing from the soul; the body is the same thing as the soul; the body is the soul as others see it from the outside; and the soul is the body as we see it from the inside."

So the gospel expressed itself in all sorts of bodily, social, and liturgical forms. John baptized with water, Jesus broke bread, the Twelve anointed the sick with oil. The power of God expressed itself through the body of Jesus in a human or flesh-and-blood ministry. As John said in his gospel, the Word took Flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his Glory; the Glory of an only Son coming from the Father. This has been the character of Christianity ever since; it does not come in word only, or in spirit only, but in word and spirit through flesh and blood.

7

God's Anointed

THIS GENERATION

ALL this time the conflict with the Pharisees and the scribes was going on, and the antagonism was growing stronger. They appear before him from time to time and argue with him. At some point they asked him for a sign from heaven, an unmistakable miracle which would prove that he was really a prophet; for that is how the people at large were beginning to think of him. John had been a prophet, so Jesus must be a prophet too; some even said that he was John risen from the dead, by which perhaps they meant that the spirit of John was now directing the ministry of Jesus, or just that he was the successor of John and had the same spirit. We do not know quite what they meant.

Jesus absolutely refused to give any such sign for any such purpose. No sign would be given them at all except the sign of the prophet Jonah. Judging by the account of the conversation as given by Luke, he meant that Jonah preached and men repented. The fact of their repentance proved that John was a prophet. A spiritual mission authenticates itself spiritually; those who cannot see this are not worthy of being given any further authentication. The publicans and the sinners repented when they heard John preach, and then accepted his baptism; that ought to be a sign enough for anyone. The common people could see it, but the scribes and Pharisees could not.

Jesus speaks very candidly now of the unfaithful generation which had failed to accept either John or himself. John had been so righteous and ascetic, and Jesus was so gracious and

friendly to all; but neither of them suited the scribes and Pharisees. The unfaithful generation is a phrase picked out of the Exodus stories, which were told at Passover and Pentecost; it referred to the Israelites in the desert who provoked Moses and were unfaithful to God even at the foot of Mount Sinai, where the ten commandments were given. History repeated itself.

These thoughts were much in the mind of Jesus when he was dealing with his own people in the desert at the foot of his own mountain in the Passover and Pentecost season.

CAESARAEA PHILIPPI

The crisis came in the middle of the summer. Jesus was with some of his disciples near the city of Caesaraea Philippi which was rather north of Bethsaida, which was the home of Peter and Andrew and Philip. It was a fine new modern city under the rule of Herod's brother Philip. Jesus was safe there. He discussed with his disciples the popular ideas about who or what he was: a prophet like John? a prophet like Elijah? a prophet like Jeremiah? And then he put the question to them: "Who do *you* say that I am?" Peter answered for all: "Thou art the Anointed; God's Son." Jesus replied by saying that they were not to tell anyone; and then he went on to say that he would be rejected by the authorities in Jerusalem, and killed, and rise to life again on the third day.

Before we consider this, however, we must take up a saying which is only given by Matthew. Jesus turned to Peter and said "Blessed art thou, Simon son of Jonah; for flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Peter's faith was not just a human opinion; it was an inspiration from God. Then he added: "And what I say to you is this, Thou art Peter (Petros the stone); and upon this petra (or rock) I will build my church; and the gates of death will not prevail against it." Peter is the first stone in the new building, because he is the first to declare his faith as a result of God's grace in his heart; he is the first Christian,

as we would say. I think the translation "gates of death" is better than "gates of hell"; the word means the grave or the underworld, it does not mean a place of torment. It is death that will be overcome by the new faith.

But Jesus has more to say: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." The keys are the badge of office of the chief steward or manager of a big house or household, or of a royal palace. If Jesus is to be king, Peter is to be the chief of his staff. He is to be the leader of the disciples, that is, for they are all stewards or officers in his household. As for binding and loosing, that power is given to them all a page or two later in the same gospel; he gives his servants authority in his household, and recognizes Peter as their leader.

The language recalls the language of the rabbinic schools. Binding and loosing meant giving decisions on points of order; binding meant forbidding and loosing meant permitting. It also includes the idea of forgiveness. Such powers in the church were given by Jesus to the Twelve, with Peter as their leader.

THE ANOINTED

We have used the word king, and that is probably just what Peter meant by the word Anointed. He used the Aramaic word "messiha" or the Hebrew "messiah", which meant anointed or smeared with oil, the word which was translated into Greek as "christos". Anointing with oil was an everyday practice after washing in a hot country; but it had acquired a sacramental significance as well, and we have seen that kings were anointed as part of their enthronement ceremony. It signified the infusion of divine grace or power. The word meant "the anointed of the Lord", the sacred king, God's king.

Jesus was a descendant of King David; but we notice that he has said nothing about this. Occasionally some excited person had hailed him as the Anointed or the Son of David, but he had silenced them. He now accepts the title of the

Anointed from his leading apostle; but he does not want it talked about. His idea of the kingdom is very different from theirs; his mission on earth was much wider and grander than that of an earthly king, and yet at the same time humbler and more human. It would do harm for it to get about that he wanted to establish a new kingdom like the old kingdom of David. And yet he *was* the Messiah and the Son of David.

Now it is a fact that the Jews at this time did expect that God would do something for them; but there were many ideas on the subject, some of them very fantastic. Many of them expected something much more wonderful and glorious than a King like David. Perhaps the Messiah would be a deliverer from heaven; a Son of Man as they called him; a being more like an angel, or like God himself. It is not possible for us to form a clear idea on the matter, since the Jews were not agreed among themselves; but they knew what he was to *do*. He was to be a deliverer, he was to destroy the enemies of Israel, he was to judge the ungodly, he was to bring peace and prosperity and glory. Sometimes they thought he would bring in the end of the world; the dead would be raised, the final judgment would take place. There was no end to their dreams.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REJECTION

That is why Jesus said at once something which shocked his disciples and amazed them. He calls himself by the glorious title Son of Man, but he tells them that the Son of Man was destined to suffer many woes, and be rejected by the elders and high priests and scribes, and be killed, and rise again on the third day. It is not surprising that Peter, so much elated by his act of faith and the blessing which he had received, should take it upon himself now to utter a protest: "God forbid," he said. "This shall never be done to you." "Get behind me, Satan," said Jesus. "You are a stone of stumbling to me"—no longer a stone to build his church with, but a stone to trip people up and make them fall; "You are thinking the thoughts of men, and not the thoughts of God."

There was a great conflict now between the Lord and his chief disciple; so much so that Jesus could say that he was playing the part of Satan. He knew that he must go up to Jerusalem and die, but Peter could not accept this; he had a very different idea of the kingdom, an earthly idea.

It is a large question to go into here, but it reveals the heart of the gospel. Wherever the gospel of God's Kingdom is preached, there will be conflict with the selfishness and stupidity of sinful man. God's servants are always despised and rejected. All the advances have been won by personal sacrifices, often by death itself. Jesus will die, but that is the way by which the kingdom can come on earth in power. He will die, but he will rise again. He will be defeated, but he will come back victorious.

This is the secret hidden in the seed parable and in the sacrament of the broken bread. It had been foreshadowed in the death of the forerunner, John the Baptist, and in the life and witness of all God's prophets.

TAKING UP THE CROSS

Jesus now gathers the whole crowd of disciples together. At the beginning of the gospel in Galilee, he had called men to follow him; now he proceeds to unveil all that was implied in that call. We know the end of the gospel story, and the expansion of Christianity in the generations which followed, and we read these words with all that knowledge in our mind; but those who heard them for the first time got a very different idea. They only saw it in the short range of the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem to claim his kingdom. This is what he said:

> If anybody wants to be a follower of mine, he must deny himself,
> And carry his cross as he comes after me.
> If anybody wants to save his life, he will lose it;
> But if anybody loses it for my sake and the gospel's, he will save it.

For what advantage would it be,
To gain the whole world and to lose his own life?
Or what would a man give in exchange for his life?
So anyone who is ashamed of me and my words
In this sinful and adulterous generation;
The Son of Man will be ashamed of him
When he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Now first we have to notice that the reference to the cross is not a metaphor or figure of speech. For those who heard Jesus it was a statement of literal fact. There had been many revolts and rebellions in the Galilean hills and they had ended in crucifixions. The men who heard Jesus were probably ready to take this risk. There were doubtless many tough men among them; James and John the sons of thunder, Simon the "zealot" or rebel, Judas the "Sicariot" or dagger-man, and others of the same kind. If you follow me to Jerusalem, Jesus told them, you might just as well bring your crosses with you. When Mark wrote his gospel, the words had already come to have their Christian meaning of accepting sacrifice in God's service; but even then, and for long after, Christians were still in danger of actual martyrdom and actual crucifixion. Peter himself had recently died as a martyr, perhaps by crucifixion.

What is meant by saving or losing the life? Just that in the first place; but the word may also be translated soul. It means something in between those two ideas. It is the flame or breath of life in us, which animates the body, and loves and hates and fears and hopes; it is the ego itself. We must sacrifice ourselves for Christ and his gospel; we must die to live. Those who do not die with him, those who are ashamed of him now, how much more ashamed they will be when he comes in the glory of God with the holy angels. (And not one of them died with him. He died alone.)

This is the first of the great sayings about the coming in glory; and they are very difficult, because, of course, they are expressed in poetic language. Jesus will die upon the cross;

but he will rise again, he will reign in glory, he will come in power. A further statement is added: There are some standing by who will live to *see* "God's Kingdom come in power". They will see it before they taste of death. We must leave this problem for the time. His message here is that after his death, and because of his death, he will be exalted in glory, and the Kingdom will come, and some will see it.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

Immediately after this declaration, three of them do have a vision of the Son of Man in the glory of his Father, though they have not tasted of death. It is a week later, and Jesus goes up into a very high mountain, and takes Peter and James and John with him; they see him in communion with God and have a vision of the heavenly glory that truly belongs to him. His face shines, he is clad in robes of light, saints in glory appear with him: Elijah on one side and Moses on the other; a cloud of light enfolds them, and a Voice comes out of the cloud: "This is my beloved Son, hear him." Heaven is close in to earth therefore; God's glory is always about us, though our eyes do not perceive it.

Human beings do not see God, but their prayers and devotion can be so intense that he makes his presence known to them in visions which are symbolic of the spiritual reality. There are many cases of such visions in the history of religion. It was midsummer, and the Jews have a fast at midsummer, in which they remember how Moses went up into Mount Sinai again, after the people of Israel had forsaken God and were worshipping the golden calf; he went up to make an atonement for the people, and to offer his own life for theirs. When he came down again, his face shone with light. But the three Apostles saw Jesus as a person infinitely greater than Moses. He was God's dear Son with Moses and Elijah standing one on each side of him. He was still the earthly Son of Man, poor and despised and rejected; but he was also the heavenly Son of Man who spoke of God as his Father. They saw it in a vision in a moment of time, and then it faded away.

Peter would have retained the vision if he could. He wanted to build three shrines, one for Jesus, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. The centre of the gospel would then have been fixed in Galilee. They would never have had to go up to Jerusalem at all. It was another temptation. Jesus would not even let them tell the others about the vision.

DEATH AND RESURRECTION

As they went down from the mountain, they talked about death and resurrection. They had seen two of the saints in glory in their vision, one of whom was Elijah, and the Jewish people believed that Elijah would appear on earth again before the Messiah. Elijah had come, Jesus said, for John the Baptist was the Elijah of that generation; and they had treated him as might be expected of them, just as it was written in the scriptures.

What the scriptures say is that all Israel had gone astray by worshipping false gods, and Elijah had stood up alone for the true God. He had defied the wicked king and the wicked queen, like John the Baptist. The wicked queen had sworn to have his life, just as Herod's queen had done with John; but Elijah had escaped into the desert. Nevertheless, like Moses, he offered his life to God: "Take away my life," he said, "for I am no better than my fathers." God had ordered him to appoint successors, and then he had taken him to himself.

God had dealt with his people through Moses and Elijah, and now he was dealing with them through John the Baptist and the Son of Man. It would be exactly the same story, a story of conflict with the world, a conflict of life and death. The Son of Man would suffer many things and be despised, he would be put to death; yet he was God's Son, and God would glorify him. God does not reveal himself to man simply by what his prophets *say*; he reveals himself in their characters and personalities, and especially in their conflicts and sufferings for the truth. These profound ideas had been expressed in a poem which was in the mind of Jesus at the

time; it was the song about the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53:

He is despised and rejected of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief . . .
Surely he hath borne our griefs,
And carried our sorrows . . .
He was wounded for our transgressions:
He was bruised for our iniquities . . .
He poured out his life unto death:
And he was numbered with the transgressors.

THE MESSIANIC SECRET

The Transfiguration is the exact half-way point of the gospel. It divides in two exactly here. The Transfiguration opens the second half as the Baptism opens the first half. We are in possession now of all the elements which make up the heart of the gospel. The story moves towards the Passion.

These elements were revealed to a very small circle. The three were given the vision, the Twelve were given the announcement, the "crowd" was invited to take up the cross. They were all given fair warning. In the inner circle it was known that Jesus was the Messiah; but a very different Messiah from what the Jews expected, a true Servant of the Lord, predestined to conflict with his own people, to shame and suffering, and to an ignominious death. But he was also the heavenly Son of God, and would come again in glory. Indeed he was the Son of God all the way through; the power and the glory was there for those who had eyes to see. Very slowly he opened the eyes of his inner circle to see it, first in works of forgiveness and healing and the mastery of the unquiet spirits, then in the teaching on the mountain about the blessedness of suffering for righteousness' sake, then in the parables and mysteries which established certain leading thoughts in their minds, then in the sacrament of the broken bread, finally in the outright statements about death and glory which were still too hard for the disciples to accept.

While we can see the progression and movement as the story unfolds, it is not possible to work out any system of theology or logic to hold it all together. Every story about Jesus, and every parable or piece of teaching, is clear and simple and lucid; and yet in every case there is a mystery in it, there is deeper truth than appears on the surface. We pass from one to another, and our feeling is one of amazement and wonder and delight, just like the feeling of those who first saw and heard; but there is no thread of unity in it except the personality of the Son of God who moves through it with calm certainty and decision. It is more like a drama than a theology. We really cannot blame the Apostles if they were baffled and puzzled and failed to understand. We may well ask why they continued to follow, when he preached his crusade at Caesaraea, and invited them to take up the cross. Some indeed deserted him, we are told in the gospel of St John; they went back and walked no more with him. Jesus turned to the Twelve and said, "Do you also want to go away?" "To whom shall we go?" said Peter simply. "You have the words of eternal life."

It was their love and trust in him that kept them faithful. They put up with the fact that they could not understand him. It has to be remembered too that the great act had not yet been done, and that we read it all in the light of the crucifixion and subsequent Christian faith:

> Glorious—most glorious is the crown
> Of Him who brought salvation down,
> By meekness, called thy Son:
> Thou at stupendous truth believ'd—
> And now the matchless deed's achiev'd,
> DETERMINED, DARED, AND DONE.

8

The Road to Jerusalem

We have now passed through the midsummer of the year 29, and it is less easy to make out the order of events. Mark and Matthew seem to bring Jesus rather soon to Jerusalem for the crucifixion, which has been prepared for by the declarations at Caesaraea Philippi; but actually nine months intervened. And only three months later there was the great autumn "Feast of Tabernacles", which Jesus went up for, according to John. Luke inserts a great number of stories and sayings, some of which occur in the course of a journey through Samaria. We will take them in turn, beginning with Mark and Matthew.

THE CONCLAVE AT CAPERNAUM

According to Mark, Jesus at once turns south and passes secretly through Galilee to Capernaum; and even when he was there, he would not have it known. On the way he told his disciples again what was going to happen to him, but he adds an ominous remark; he would be *betrayed*. They paid little attention to what he was saying, they were disputing among themselves about which one was the greatest. They were dividing into little groups, and some of them were ambitious for leadership. The thought of Jesus as King made them think of politics, and they wanted positions in the kingdom. Jesus could see what was happening; it was going to be a hard thing to hold them together and instil different ideas into their minds. He foresaw that it would end up with

treachery. In John's gospel he says, "Have I not chosen you Twelve; and one of you is a devil?"

When they were in the house, he summoned them to a solemn conclave; he intended to face this danger. "If anybody wants to be first," he said, "he will be the last, and everybody's servant." It seems there were no volunteers for the position on these terms. Then he performed a great symbolic act; he took a little child, and installed him as an Apostle. He made him stand among them, he put his arm around him, and said, "Anybody who receives this little child in my name, receives me; anybody who receives me, receives Him that sent me." They were the very words with which he had given them their authority to speak and act on his behalf; just as he spoke and acted for God, so they were to speak and act for him. This is the commission which is passed on in the apostolic ministry of the Christian Church; but it is meant to make men humble, not proud or ambitious.

The words reminded John of something he had done. He had seen a man casting out demons in the name of Jesus, and had stopped him because he was not one of the recognized disciples: "he followeth not with us." This remark drew a terrible rebuke from Jesus. "Do not stop him," he said. "Nobody who does a work of power in my name is ever likely to speak evil of me; anybody who is not against us, is on our side; even if it is only a cup of cold water that he gives you, he will not lose his reward. And anybody who offends one of these little ones who have faith, it would be better for him to have a mill-stone tied round his neck and be dropped in the deep sea!" He was thinking of the border-line believer as well as the child-apostle when he said this. The disciple of Jesus must be very tender and sympathetic in dealing with those who are only beginners in the faith, or go their way apart from the regular ministry of the church.

Jesus had not said such harsh things before to his own disciples, but he could see that they were infected by a bad spirit. It must be cut out altogether. "If your hand is infected," he said, "cut it off and throw it away; better to lose the hand

and enter into life, than have the whole body corrupted and thrown into the flames."

It is possible that Mark is gathering together here a number of sayings about the evils that can appear in the life of the brotherhood, and Matthew adds a number more; indeed it is one of his most important chapters of gospel teaching. There must be no ambition or jealousy or bad feeling; they must live in humility and charity and in the spirit of forgiveness. "How long am I to go on forgiving my brother?" Peter asked. "Up to seven times?" "No," said Jesus, "not up to seven times; up to seventy times seven." And he told the story of the Unforgiving Servant, who had been forgiven by his master, and yet could not bring himself to forgive his fellow-servant. Indeed the master had much to endure and to forgive, as he still does.

He had a symbol or parable for the spirit of peace and charity which ought to reign in any group of his disciples. It was his little saying about the salt. Every fisherman knew that salt preserved his fish and prevented it from going bad; it might even draw the poison out of an infected hand. "Salt is a good thing," said Jesus. "But what if the salt loses its saltness? Have salt among yourselves and live in peace." Perhaps he let them sit down to supper then.

THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

After that Mark and Matthew tell of a journey to Jerusalem, and of certain events on the way. There were a great number of disciples in the caravan, and there were women and children as well as men. It was on this journey that the mothers brought their children to Jesus, and the disciples tried to prevent them. Jesus does not rebuke them this time; perhaps they were trying to protect him from constant calls on his time. He takes the children in his arms, caresses them with his hand, and says, "Let the children come to me; for of such is the Kingdom of God."

There is something new in the concern of Jesus for little children, and his joy in their simplicity and trust. He wished

his disciples were more like them. The ancient world was not like ours. It was a man's world. The men of that day regarded women as inferior to themselves; the great Rabbis forbade their disciples to spend time with women, so Jesus shocked everybody by his friendships with them. Wherever his gospel has gone, the position of women and children has improved.

This side of the mission of Jesus was especially dear to Luke, and Luke gives us a longer account of this journey of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem, with many stories in it which illustrate his graciousness and interest in all kinds of people. He begins it by saying that Jesus now set his face in a determined way to go to Jerusalem; and, as he did so, he passed through Samaria. The Jews and the Samaritans were enemies, and there was a Samaritan village which refused to entertain him when they heard he was going to Jerusalem. At once the two disciples, James and John, showed their fiery and intolerant spirit. "Shall we command fire to come down on it, and burn it up, as Elijah did?" they asked him. But Jesus did not think that everything that was done in the Old Testament was right. "You do not understand the spirit you are of; the Son of Man came to save men's lives, not to destroy them." And he went on to the next village. I think we can see why he called these brothers the Sons of Thunder.

It may be asked at this point why Jesus chose men like this to be his disciples. Why did he choose Judas Iscariot, if he knew that he had the makings of a traitor in him? There are no perfect men, except the one. He chose them for their faith and their sincerity and their great possibilities. Perhaps Judas had the greatest possibilities of all. Perhaps Peter was an equal risk. Furthermore, we might look at ourselves and at the Church to-day. Has it no faults? Are there no parties or cliques in the Church? Are all church people kind and tolerant to other forms of religious faith? Do they care enough for work among children and the young? It would seem that the same evils appear in the same places in all ages.

Luke tells us that Jesus now chose seventy (or seventy-two) disciples whom he sent ahead of him into every town or village which he was going to visit himself. This arrangement was different from the mission of the Twelve, who were sent out, apparently, to follow up the evangelistic work of Jesus himself, not as heralds of his approach; but all evangelistic missions have much in common, and very similar directions were given to them. Indeed Luke includes, at this point, many directions for evangelists which Matthew has given in the mission of the Twelve. Scholars think that they were gathered together by Christian teachers, and used for the guidance of evangelists in the apostolic church. St Paul alludes to them in writing to the Corinthians about missionary work in his own time.

Moses had chosen seventy elders to assist him in ministering to the people of Israel in the desert; and the supreme council which governed the nation consisted of seventy men who were called elders, or seventy-two, with the high priest and the chief justice. That, no doubt, is why some manuscripts of Luke read seventy-two instead of seventy. In Israel these numbers had a historical and religious significance, so that we can see why Jesus would choose seventy or seventy-two; his Church, with its Twelve and its Seventy, was the beginning of a new Israel within the old. It is interesting to see that the modern Israeli state has a supreme council of seventy.

We do not know the names of any of the seventy, though many guesses have been made. Someone, a century or two later, proposed the idea that Luke himself was one of them, and that is why the story of the Seventy was chosen as the gospel for his day; but it is not possible. There have been many such suggestions which have been handed down in the Church; but they are not history, and we cannot take them seriously. Another idea of the same sort is the supposition that the second James, Jude, and Simon, who appear in the list of the Twelve, were the brothers of Jesus of those names.

That is impossible too. The family of Jesus did not understand him at this time, though they came to do so later.

MARY AND MARTHA

Another case of supposed identity for which there is no evidence at all, is that of St Mary Magdalene. Early in his gospel St Luke has a story of a dinner-party in the house of "Simon the Pharisee" at which a "woman who was a sinner" came in and anointed our Lord's feet. The Pharisee taunted Jesus with not knowing she was a bad woman. Jesus defended her, and finally said that her sins, which were many, were forgiven because she loved much. The woman is not named, and there is no reason for supposing that she was Mary Magdalene.

The other evangelists have a different story about a different woman, who came into a dinner-party in the house of "Simon the leper" and anointed our Lord's head. Nobody said she was a bad woman; Judas Iscariot complained about the waste of the ointment; Jesus defended her and said she was doing it beforehand for his burial. It was a few days before the crucifixion. St John, in his gospel, says that she was Mary the sister of Martha. There is no reason for thinking that she was Mary Magdalene either.

Mary Magdalene was one of the women who came to the tomb of Jesus early on Easter Sunday morning, and found it empty; St John tells us that the first appearance of the risen Lord was to her. Her second name seems to mean that she lived at Magdala on the shore of the Lake of Galilee; and St Luke says that she had been healed of demon-possession. She is included among the group of women who accompanied Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem, and looked after his needs; among these was Salome who was the mother of James and John, and a sister of the Virgin. Other names are given, but nothing very certain is known about them. Some must have been wealthy, since they are said to have ministered to Jesus out of their own property.

John tells us that Mary and Martha were two sisters who

lived at Bethany not far from Jerusalem. Their father was "Simon the leper"; their brother was Lazarus. It seems that Jesus made their house his home, when he was in that neighbourhood. It is Luke who tells us how Martha occupied herself with preparing the supper, while Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his talk, no doubt along with his disciples. Martha was making quite elaborate preparations for her guest, and wanted Mary to come and help her. She was just a little cross. "Lord," she said, "doesn't it matter to you that my sister has left me to do all this work alone? Tell her to come and help me." Jesus did not say that Mary had chosen the better part, as one preacher after another has repeated it; he said that Mary had chosen a *good* part, and the word which is translated "part" means one of the dishes at a dinner. It was one of his sayings with just a touch of humour in it: "Martha," he said, "Martha, you are anxious and worried about a number of things"—a number of dishes for the dinner, he meant—"a few things are all we need, or even one; and Mary has chosen a good dish which is not going to be taken away from her."

It was not a very serious saying, and shows Jesus in a lighter mood; he was relaxed as we say. Luke gives us a number of stories like this.

THE PARABLES OF LUKE

Luke liked stories about people in their homes and social life. Jesus told stories of this kind, and it is Luke who records them. There is the "Good Samaritan" who was going to Jerusalem on business and saw the poor man lying by the roadside, who had been set upon by robbers and left half dead. The priest and the Levite had passed him by because they knew that if they touched a dead body they would be defiled, and not allowed to take part in the temple service; but the Samaritan got off his donkey, and bandaged up his wounds, and took him to the inn, and looked after him, and paid the bill. Which one behaved like a neighbour, Jesus asked; why, the one who was not a neighbour at all, he was the real neighbour.

The parable about the Lost Sheep is in Matthew as well, but it is followed in Luke by the Lost Coin. The woman in this parable had ten silver coins and lost one. She wasted no time; she lit a lamp, she swept the whole house, and she never stopped till she found it. And this is followed by the Lost Son, or Prodigal Son, as it is called; the bad boy of the family, who made his father give him the family money that belonged to him, and went off to a far country, and wasted it all on good meals and bad girls. Then he nearly starved to death looking after a rich farmer's pigs, and wished he was as well fed as they were. Then he came to himself and saw what a fool he had been; he did the sensible thing and went home to his father, not expecting a very glorious reception; but his father was so pleased that he gave him everything—fine clothes, new shoes, a gold ring, and a magnificent dinner. The only shadow is the "good brother"; he was so offended that he would not come in.

These parables are all meant to teach compassion; but there is another side to them, the shadow as I have called it, the priest who failed to help the wounded man, or the "good" brother who was hard-hearted or unforgiving. These represent the so-called righteous or religious people who opposed Jesus and his gospel. They appear more clearly still in other parables. Two men went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee went up to the front and said, "I thank God that I am not like other men . . . not like that publican!" The publican said, "God have mercy on me a sinner." One of them went back to his house "justified"; he was in God's good books, that is.

PARABLES OF JUDGMENT

Luke does not intend to give the idea that all scribes or Pharisees or respectable people were in the wrong; he was thinking of those who were hard-hearted and despised others. Unfortunately many of them were hard-hearted and despised others. Some of these were wealthy, and these men are not spared in the parables which Luke records. It was indeed for

sins like these that God was going to bring judgment on his people.

There was a certain rich man who wore fine clothes and lived in luxury; and there was a beggar at his door named Lazarus who got a few crumbs from his table; the dogs were affectionate to him, and nobody else. When the rich man died he had a fine funeral; but what happened to the poor man's body, when he died, is not known. I suspect that the dogs got it. In the other world the conditions were reversed. Lazarus sits at table next to Abraham; the rich man burns in hell. "O father Abraham," he says, "send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and cool my tongue"; but, alas, this cannot be done; there is a great gulf between them which Lazarus cannot pass over. This is not a description of the next world; it is just a parable, a sort of dream; but these parables all contain a profound truth. The profound truth in this parable is the great gulf which cannot be passed over; who put it there?

Sometimes a rich man went away on a journey and left his great estates in charge of a "steward" or manager. In one parable, news comes to the owner that his manager is being extravagant and wasting his money; he gives him notice; he must send in his accounts, and give up his position. The manager's mind works very quickly; he calls in all the tenants and reduces their rents. They think he is a fine fellow, and when the blow falls, they take him into their houses. His employer laughs and calls him a smart man, "the lord commended the unrighteous manager because he had acted cleverly." Some good people to-day are rather upset about this parable; but what it means is that if this rather shady character learned to be compassionate when it was the smart thing to do, why cannot better men learn to be compassionate for better reasons, and not wait until the hour of judgment comes.

A certain rich man found his estates prospering so well that he hardly knew what to do with all his produce. "What shall I do?" he said. "I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and pile up all my produce and riches in them;

then I can say to my soul, You have plenty of property for many years, take it easy, eat, drink, and be merry." But God said, "You idiot! this very night your life will be taken from you." The kind of people that Jesus is thinking of are those who think of nothing in this life but their own importance and comfort.

THE ABSENTEE LANDLORD

Jesus had warnings for his own disciples as well as for the heartless or proud or self-indulgent. There is a whole class or series of parables which are based upon the theme of the absentee landlord. It was, apparently, one of the social evils of the day that the owners of these great estates, who were the wealthy people of their time, would leave them to go abroad, and pay little attention to the welfare of their people, provided they got their rents or profits. It was then necessary to find a very dependable manager. He was chosen apparently from among the slaves, for many slaves were educated capable professional people. He was put in charge of all the others; he had to see that they did their work and allot them their food and other necessaries. He had his temptations; he might think to himself that his master was putting off his return, he might begin to knock the slave-boys and slave-girls about, and to eat and drink and be drunken. Then what a grim scene there would be when the master unexpectedly arrived; judgment would be meted out, he would be flogged and degraded from his position of trust.

It is like the story of the steward who reduced the rents; it is a picture from real life, and depicts what the conditions of the time actually were. And so it is with the slaves who were given sums of money to trade with, "talents", or pounds. These real-life parables were used by Jesus to reinforce his gospel. Sometimes the slaves or tenant-farmers represented the priests or scribes or other high authorities in the nation, who were in charge of God's people; in other cases they were the apostles themselves, whom he had placed in charge of his household. He himself is the master who is going on the long journey to a far country, and that long journey is the journey

of death; but let them have no doubt that he will come back. The master of that slave will return in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware.

When Jesus speaks of his coming back to the disciples, he does not only mean the coming at the end of the world. There are many comings and many judgments, which come upon Churches or nations that grow careless of the trust that God has placed in them, and individuals too. When the Pharisees asked Jesus *when* the kingdom of God would come, he gave no satisfying answer; he said that it did not come "by observation", it was impossible to say, "Here it is" or "There it is", for it was within you. It struck like lightning. As the lightning lightens from one side of the sky and flashes to the other side of it, so would it be with the Son of Man in his day. If anyone says, "Look here" or " Look there", don't follow them for you know not the day or the hour.

JESUS IN JERUSALEM

We could not work out the order of the events from the parables and stories which St Luke gives in such plenty; it is likely that he did not know it, for he was not one of the disciples of that time. It is St John who makes the outline of events clear.

The greatest festival of the Jews was the autumn festival called Tabernacles, which occurred in September or October. It was the final harvest festival when the fruits of the trees were brought in, and the grapes gathered and made into wine. It lasted eight days, and was full of merriment. The people made huts in which they slept; they had processions with palms and other branches, when they sang Hosanna; there was a great ceremony of pouring water upon the altar-stone, which was said to mean the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; the temple-courts were illuminated with lamps, and there was dancing. Jesus came up quietly to this feast, and appeared in the temple-courts in the middle of it. He debated with the Jewish authorities about the mission from God which he was exercising, and the divine authority of his teaching; some

believed, some questioned, many were puzzled, they knew not whence he came or whither he was going, Jesus said. He took up the symbolism of the feast: he was the light of the world, and whoever followed him would not walk in darkness, but would have the light of life; out of his heart would flow the rivers of living water, "whoever is athirst, let him come, and he who has faith in me, let him drink", and by this, St John says, he meant the Holy Spirit which those who believed in him would receive. In all our gospel records he speaks in parables and bold figures of speech drawn from apocalypse and liturgy, a kind of language which was well known in Israel, but there had never been such a master of it as he.

In the deep mid-winter there was another festival. It was the Feast of the Dedication so-called; but the word means Renewal or Restoration. It referred to the rededication of the Temple after it had been captured and desecrated by the Greeks about two hundred years before. His great parable of the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep, was given before he went up to this feast, but he continues to talk about it in Jerusalem. During these festivals there were several attempts to take him prisoner or put him to death, but the people were on his side, and he passed through their midst, and escaped out of the hand of his enemies. He went to the place where John was baptizing at the first. He came back to Bethany when his friend Lazarus died, and we are given a long account of how he raised him from the dead. After that Jesus took refuge in a city called Ephraim, probably among the Samaritans.

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The Temple made with Hands

THE PASSOVER

WINTER passes and spring comes. The spring equinox is March 21, and the great festival of the Passover was the full moon which occurred next after this day, for the Jewish year was calculated by moons. The new moon of the spring equinox marked the beginning of the month Nisan, it was Nisan 1. The full moon was Nisan 14–15. Our Easter Day is the Sunday after this full moon. It can come in the last week of March; it can come almost at the end of April.

Jesus and all his army of followers went up to Jerusalem for the Passover, as enormous numbers of pious Jews did from all over the world. Strictly speaking the Passover could not be celebrated outside the sacred city. The lamb had to be killed in the temple, and its blood poured out on the altar. The feast commemorates the night on which the people of Israel were delivered from their condition of slavery in the land of Egypt. According to the twelfth chapter of Exodus the Lord came down and inflicted the last of the ten strokes (or plagues) upon the Egyptians by the death of their first-born; the Jews marked their own houses by splashing the doors with the blood of the slaughtered lamb, they ate their sacrificial meal with their long robes "girded up" and their staves in their hands ready for the journey, and on the next day they went out as free men.

They remembered all these things; their long journey through the "Red Sea" into the desert, their meeting with the Lord God at the foot of Mount Sinai, the covenant which

he made with them, and the ten commandments which he gave them. The Jews still keep this festival in their houses, though the lamb is not sacrificed at the altar in Jerusalem any more; they remember how God chose them and saved them to be his own people. For Christians, as St Paul told the Corinthians, these stories have the value of symbols; they are "types" or patterns of the gospel and the sacraments; and they form the background of the Christian Easter. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us," he said. "Therefore let us keep the feast."

Christ came up to Jerusalem for the Passover, but it seems that he never kept it. He had his "Last Supper" with his disciples on the night before it; and, on the afternoon of the day itself, while the lambs were being slaughtered in the temple, he died for us upon the cross. It is St John who makes the order of events clear.

THE RANSOM FOR MANY

It is St Mark who tells us how they made their journey, Jesus walking ahead and the disciples following him with strange feelings in their hearts; they were amazed, he says, and as they followed they were scared. Then Jesus took them and told them for the last time exactly what was going to happen. He would be handed over to the gentiles, he would be mocked and beaten and spit on and killed, and after three days he would rise again. The Jewish authorities at this time had no power to impose the death sentence themselves; he would be handed over to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who always came up to Jerusalem for the Passover, with armed forces, because it was a time of excitement and disturbance, and there might be riots in the streets.

In spite of all he had said, the disciples had not given up the idea of making Jesus king. James and John came to him with their mother Salome, and asked to be given the highest posts in the kingdom, "to sit one on his right and the other on his left". "You do not understand what you are asking for," said Jesus. "Can you drink of my cup? Can you be

baptized with my baptism?" He speaks in sacramental language, but his meaning is clear; could they share his sufferings and death? They said they could, and Jesus told them that they would; but the positions on the right hand and on the left were not his to give; God had reserved them for others. And later on we read that two thieves were crucified with him, "one on the right and the other on the left".

The other members of the Twelve were angry with James and John, and Jesus had to call them all together again, and explain the nature of his kingdom. The rulers of the gentiles lord it over their subjects, he said, but that was not how it was to be with them. Whoever wanted to be a great man among them must be their servant, whoever wanted to be their leader must be the slave of all. The Son of Man had not come to be surrounded by servants, but to be a servant, and to give his life as a ransom for many. These words express in the simplest language the gospel idea of kingship as a form of service, and the ancient idea that the king must be ready to die for his people; but Jesus does not actually use the word "king"; it seems that he was very careful about that.

JERICHO

Deep down in the Jordan Valley, lower than the level of the sea, lies the city of Jericho, famous for its palm trees. A blind beggar sat by the roadside in the heat and dust. A great crowd was passing by, and he asked who it was; "Jesus of Nazareth," he was told. "Jesus," he shouted out, "Jesus son of David, have pity on me!" They tried to hush him, but he would not be hushed. Presently he heard the crowd stop moving, Jesus was calling him; with the blind man's sure instinct he leapt to his feet, threw off his cloak, and ran to Jesus. "What do you want?" Jesus asked. "Oh Rabbi," he answered, "I want to see again." "Go your way," said Jesus. "Your faith has saved you." The blind man received his sight and fell in with the crowd; he followed Jesus.

There is something totally new here. In Galilee Jesus had checked the enthusiasts who hailed him as Messiah or Son of

God or son of David. The bystanders check this man, but Jesus accepts his homage; he bestows upon him a mark of his favour. He is approaching the royal city, and allows himself to be received as king.

In Jericho he stayed at the house of the little publican, Zacchaeus, who was so small that he had to climb a tree to watch Jesus over the heads of the crowd.

On the next day they made the seventeen-mile journey to Jerusalem, all of it uphill, for Jerusalem is more than two thousand feet above sea-level. As the Psalm says, the mountains stand around Jerusalem. The highest of these is the Mount of Olives, on the east, from which there was a wonderful view of the city and the temple, which were situated on the opposite spur. Somewhere here, not far from the city, were the villages of Bethany and Bethphage. Jesus may have stayed at Bethany with his friends, certainly he dined there one night; but many of his followers seem to have camped out on the Mount of Olives, and it is likely that he camped with them.

The Messianic Secret, such as it was, now came to an end; not that Jesus now claimed to be the Messiah, but he allowed himself to be acclaimed as the Messiah. The people were ready for it, and he encouraged them to do it. The title "Son of David" which they freely gave him, was not adequate of course; he was very much more than a king like David, and his ideas were very different from theirs; but he had to step into this position in the nation and be accepted by them, in accordance with their expectations, in order to carry on the gospel mission for the nation as a whole. Had the nation accepted him as the divine king who was foretold by their prophets, the whole history of the human race would have been different; the gospels say that the people did accept him, whereas the high priests and elders and scribes rejected him. We see now one of the most dramatic scenes in the whole story; God's Son comes into conflict with the hard unresponsive world; it leads to his crucifixion.

St John tells us that it was on the Sunday that Jesus rode into Jerusalem. The crowd halts at the Mount of Olives. The ass is brought from the village opposite. The ass or donkey was not a comic animal in the ancient east, important people rode on asses on state occasions. When David's son, Solomon, was made king, he went in procession through the streets of Jerusalem seated on a mule. All the people shouted, "God save King Solomon." In the case of Jesus, they carried all kinds of branches in their hands; they laid their cloaks on the ground before him, and they shouted or sang "Hosanna" (or Hosianna) which means "Save now". It was a refrain from the hundred and eighteenth psalm which they customarily sang in the temple on great days in procession; its full form was "Save now, O Lord: O Lord, prosper us now; Blessed is he who cometh in the name of the Lord." Hosanna, Alleluia, and Amen are pieces of the temple music which went on being sung by the disciples of Jesus in the Church, and are with us still.

"Hoshia-na" contains the name of Jesus in it. Jesus was "Ye-Hoshia", which means "The Lord saves".

As they came over the brow of the Mount of Olives, they paused and looked at the city. It is recorded in Luke that Jesus shed tears over it. It was not for his own fate, though he knew he would be rejected and killed; it was for the fate of the city, which failed to recognize its hour of judgment. He could see that the day would come when it would be encircled with hostile armies and utterly destroyed. Not one stone would be left upon another.

His procession moved into the city and right on into the outer courts of the temple. Nobody dared to interfere with Jesus at this stage, since the people were on his side. The temple authorities were scandalized at the disciples saluting him as son of David, and especially the children in the temple who picked up the refrain. "Have you never heard the scripture?" said Jesus. "Out of the mouth of babies and infants at the breast comes perfect praise?" and "If these were to be silent, the very stones would take up the cry."

There is some difficulty about the "Cleansing of the Temple" since St John places it two years before this. It may be that St Mark has gathered together in one place all the stories he had about Jesus in Jerusalem, or else St John has placed the story where it was effective for his purposes.

The vast outer courtyard of the temple was filled with animals of all sorts which were sold for sacrifices, and no doubt the temple authorities made a good deal of money out of it. Jesus drove these animals out. Jews came up from all parts of the world with different kinds of money, which had to be changed into Jewish money. Jesus overturned the tables of the money-changers. He and his followers took command of the situation. He quoted a text from the old prophet Jeremiah, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations"; they had made it into a den of thieves, he added. It is quite clear that it was the commercialism and the money-making that he was condemning.

The high priests and the scribes and elders were too scared of the crowd to use force, but they ventured a protest. "What is your authority for doing all this?" they asked.

Jesus did not fall into their trap by saying that it was done by him as Messiah or son of David. He asked them a question of his own: "The baptism of John," he replied, "was it from heaven or from men?" They could not say from heaven, because he would have asked them why they did not believe him; they could not say from men because all the people believed John was God's prophet. "We cannot say," they answered weakly. "Neither do I say what my authority is for doing all this," said Jesus. But he made it clear what his authority was. It was the authority of God, by which he did all his mighty works and brought them the gospel of repentance.

THE VINEYARD

The disciples remembered a number of arguments with the temple authorities in those days when Jesus was in and out of

the temple courts; how could they ever be forgotten? The most important was the parable of the Vineyard; for Jesus veiled his meaning in parables, as he had done in Galilee and Samaria; but everyone could see the meaning of this one.

In the prophet Isaiah there is a folk-song about a man who planted a vineyard, and Jesus made a new one out of it, bringing into it his picture of the absentee landlord and the tenant-farmers. The owner sends a slave at the right time of the year to collect the produce of his vineyard, and the tenants take hold of him and beat him and send him away with nothing. He sends another, and they stone him, and wound him on the head, and mock him. He sends more and they beat some and kill some. It is a very unlikely sort of story, for what vineyard owner would put up with such conduct? But after all that was what God had done, he had sent prophet after prophet to Israel to be rejected and ill-treated and even killed. What did the vineyard owner do then? He had a dear son, his only son, and he resolved to send him. He said to himself, "They will reverence my son"; but when the tenants saw him, they consulted together. "Here is the heir," they said. "Let us kill him and the inheritance will be ours." Everybody could see the meaning; it was an exact picture of the high priests and scribes consulting together how to kill Jesus. Yet Jesus had made no direct statement; it was only a story he was telling, or a song he was singing.

What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come himself, he will destroy those wicked farmers, he will let out his vineyard to others. Here is the great temptation of all high priests, scribes, bishops, archbishops, kings, rulers, governors, ministers and deputies, pastors and masters: to think that they own the vineyard, to think that God is an absentee. Theologians talking about God, clergy addressing prayers to God, teachers teaching about God, authors writing books about God, it is fatally easy for them to forget that God may catch up with them: "Thou fool, this night shall thy life be required of thee"; or "Give an account of thy stewardship for thou mayest be no longer steward." This doctrine of divine advent or judgement runs through the gospel, and gives it its

terrific power; but it is not at all concentrated on a "last day" at the "end of the world". It strikes like lightning when you least expect.

THE STONES OF THE TEMPLE

After this parable there is a verse from a psalm, the same psalm from which the Hosanna chorus was taken: "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the headstone in the corner." There are a number of sayings about stones, and about building, but they are never made into a complete parable. We rather have to grope among them. Peter was a stone built into the foundation of the house or church of Jesus; Jesus himself is the rejected stone which becomes the "headstone" or pinnacle stone. There is an allegory of temple-building here, which Peter himself elaborated in his epistle. We are all stones built into a living temple, he says.

All round Jesus, as he spoke, temple-building was going on. Nearly fifty years before, the old temple had been condemned, and Herod the Great had begun the construction of a new one with marble arches and pavements and colonnades. The sanctuary had a roof of gold. Mighty stones were still being brought in, and lifted up, and adjusted in their places. The disciples of Jesus were amazed; "What manner of stones!" they said. "What manner of building!" They had never seen anything like it. "You see all this wonderful building," said Jesus; "there will not be left one stone standing upon another; they will all be destroyed."

Jesus had protested against the commercialization of the temple, and the hardness of heart of the religious authorities; he now intimates that the whole thing will pass away.

When he was being tried before the high priest, certain persons described as false witnesses stood up and said, "We heard him say that he would destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days he would build another not made with hands." We do not imagine that Jesus said he would himself destroy the temple, and this must have been

the point on which the witnesses disagreed (as Mark says they did), since it would be the point of accusation. It could not be established that he said that. But it is a saying of his, even if they misrepresented it. According to John he said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."

Jesus certainly foretold the destruction of the temple, which happened exactly forty years later. Equally certainly he spoke of another temple, which he would build himself, which would take its place; not a temple like this one, however, which was made by the hands of men, a temple of another character altogether, not made with hands. John gives us a clue to the understanding of the saying in a spiritual interpretation in which he suggests "this temple" meant the body of Jesus which the Jews were going to kill; after three days he would rise again, but it is a second meaning, not the original one. John says that the disciples did not think of it till some time after the resurrection.

APOCALYPTIC

We have noticed that Jesus has had things to say about future judgments, and that he expresses them in parables or in bold figures of speech. These symbolic prophecies go by the name of Apocalypse, a word which means unveiling or revealing; though often they look much more like veiling than unveiling. But one can only talk about future things in this way. The bold figures of speech express in a strong way the conviction of the speaker which he cannot put into exact language. The French king Louis XV is reported to have said, "After me comes the deluge"; and after him came the Revolution, and that is what he meant. He was speaking in apocalyptic language.

The temple made with hands was not merely the stone buildings which made up the temple, but all that the temple stood for: the old priesthood, sacrifice, festivals, everything; after a thousand years of history, God would bring it to an end, and that would no longer be his way of dwelling with men upon the earth. But a new one would take its place, a

spiritual temple as St Peter called it, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, his holy Church.

Now there is a great spiritual principle involved in this, which is the very heart of the gospel; it is that we die to live. In the nineteenth century there was a philosophy of Progress, and people really believed that everything in the world naturally got better and better by a process which was called Evolution. This is not what we learn from the Bible, or from history, or indeed from science. There is a touch of evil in things; things tend to get worse in some ways while they are getting better in others; by and by they drift into a terrible catastrophe, a war or a revolution; the old order of things is destroyed, but a new order of things comes into existence. This philosophy of catastrophe is the philosophy of Apocalypse. Things are getting worse in order that things may get better; things are destroyed in order that things may be built up; things die that things may live.

This is the philosophy of the seed parables too; the seed is cast into the earth, and dies, in order that it may live and bear much fruit; winter and summer alternate, but harvest follows harvest; this is what human history is like.

So Jesus says that he will die, but he will rise again in three days; the temple will be destroyed, but it will be raised again in three days; in Hebrew thought the expression "in three days" means in a short time. Their ordinary everyday speech was full of such picturesque expressions.

THE POOR WIDOW

The last story which Mark gives of Jesus in the temple concerns a poor widow. Jesus was sitting opposite the treasury, the big chests with openings in them shaped like trumpets, into which people came and put their offerings. Numbers of wealthy people came up and put in large sums. Then the poor widow came up with her two tiny coins, two "lepta" as they are called, a word which may fairly exactly be translated "chicken-feed". Four of them would make a penny. Her

gift was the greatest of all, Jesus said, it was greater than all the others put together; it was everything she possessed, all she had to live on. If the others had given all they possessed, what a pile it would have made!

Jesus spoke very strongly about the spiritual perils which beset the wealthy; it was easier, he said, for a camel to make its way through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of God, and there is no way of watering down this saying; it is one of his magnificent figures of speech of course, and was not meant to be taken literally; but it is a strong saying, which was intended to administer a shock.

Jesus admired men and women who gave themselves and everything they had for the sake of the gospel. Peter and James and John and the rest had abandoned everything, and he called on others to do the same. In a true sense, to be a Christian, everyone must give everything they have. The faith, he said, must never waver; if you have the faith, and the faith does not waver, you can say to this mountain, "Be taken up and thrown into the sea," and it will be done for you; this great mountain on which the temple stands, its old historic national grandeur, its world-wide organization, its entrenched position of wealth and power, its vast rows of marble palaces, will vanish and disappear. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of our God shall endure for ever.

10

The Coming of the Son of Man

APOCALYPSE

We now come to our most difficult task, the understanding of the apocalyptic sayings of Jesus. He gave his disciples, before he died, his own philosophy of what he was doing and why he was doing it, and what would come of it; but he gave it in apocalyptic language, and in parables, and in the form of a sacrament

Jesus appeared in Jerusalem as a prophet like Isaiah or Jeremiah. He expected to be received as a prophet even by those who would not receive him as Messiah. Isaiah and Jeremiah had denounced the corruption and materialism of the temple religion, and the tyranny and injustice of the ruling classes. Jeremiah had told them that their city would be taken and their temple destroyed. Jesus came with an exactly similar message. What comes quite clearly out of his parables and prophetic actions, is that their whole organized fabric of religion and worship was to pass away; his was to endure and build itself up and take its place. Here is one great feature of the picture of the future which was in the mind of Jesus.

Another point which is quite clear is that he expressed himself in bold figures of speech, some of which he took from the prophets who came before him, and some from the ordinary social life which went on around him. These figures of speech are not to be taken literally, indeed numbers of them cannot

be taken literally; the intention obviously is that no one ever shall take them literally. The scribes and Pharisees took the Law of Moses literally, and elaborated it logically, and tried to clamp it down on everybody; they were incapable of appreciating the simple and profound principles which it was really intended to implant in the lives of the people; justice and mercy and truth for instance. Jesus made sure that his sayings could never be treated in this way. It is the spirit in them, and the truth behind them, that counts, and we have to see that for ourselves. And so it is actually with the Law of Moses and the words of the prophets.

THE SCRIBES AND THE PHARISEES

Before we come to the apocalyptic sayings, however, we find some lamentations over the scribes and Pharisees, the blind guides who failed to understand Jesus and his mission. The expression, "Woe for you," is not a curse or expression of enmity; it is an expression of sorrow. It is in the form of a lament such as they sang for the dead. Matthew collects an enormous amount of this material together in his twenty-third chapter. We see the scribes or Pharisees walking through the streets and receiving the respectful salutes of the ordinary people; we see them adjusting their outward ornaments and behaviour, making their fine theological distinctions, concentrating on the externals of religion, scrupulous, particular, and exclusive. Jesus has a terrible phrase: "Whitened sepulchres". It seems that there were a number of burials in or near Jerusalem, and before the great feasts, the grave-stones were painted with whitewash, so that no one would touch them without knowing, and so become defiled; they were bright and clean outside, but inside they were filled with dead men's bones.

There were tombs of the prophets, too, in Jerusalem, and these were decorated, and memorial services held. "If we had lived in the days of our forefathers," they said, "we would not have taken part in the killing of the prophets"; by which, Jesus said, they admitted that they were descendants

of those who did kill the prophets. "O Jerusalem," he said, "O Jerusalem, killing the prophets, and stoning those who are sent to you, how often I desired to gather your children together even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings; but you would not have it. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. You will never see me again until you say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

When Jesus had made his last announcement in the temple, he went back with his disciples to the Mount of Olives, and the four leading men, Peter and James and John and Andrew, asked him privately when these things were to happen and what the sign would be, meaning the destruction of the temple, which he had just spoken of. From the Mount of Olives, they could look right down into the temple courts, and see the altar-smoke going up in front of the "holy house". The words he spoke were treasured by his disciples and transmitted to the Churches. We shall follow the form of them we find in St Mark, who may have added a saying or two which Jesus spoke at some other time. He also gives a word of explanation here and there.

Scholars think that it had been written down some time before Mark wrote his gospel. It is often called the "Little Apocalypse".

Jesus began by warning the disciples against false prophets who would come with all kinds of claims and predictions, and talk about wars and rumours of wars, and earthquakes and famines and so forth. They were not to be disturbed by these fanatics; such things were bound to happen, but that did not mean it was the end.

He also warned them about persecutions. They would be brought before councils and beaten in synagogues, they would stand before rulers and kings; but these things were bound to happen too. Even so the end was not yet, the gospel had to be preached to all the gentiles first. The Christians in Rome who heard these words would think of their own terrible

persecution under Nero, and the martyrdoms of St Peter and St Paul. It is the first time that Jesus speaks openly of his gospel going into all the world; but now was the time for him to say this. It would do so at once. The temple courts were full of Jews from every city in the Roman Empire, with a sprinkling of gentiles too; and when they went home they would take his story with them. Jerusalem was a microphone through which Jesus spoke to the world. His great dramatic acts and the story of his crucifixion would soon be known everywhere. Some scholars think that the story of his passion was the first part of the gospel to be written down, and naturally it would be the first to be widely known.

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

The lector or reader, who was reading this "Little Apocalypse" of Jesus in the church, now came to a reference to the prophet Daniel which it was his business to explain. "When you see the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing where it ought not—the reader must use his intelligence on this—then those who are in Judaea are to escape to the mountains. Nobody is to stop to take anything with them; there is going to be affliction such as the world has never seen."

Fortunately it is not hard for us to use our own intelligence on this; a reference to Daniel makes the meaning perfectly clear. The "Abomination of Desolation" in that book referred to the emperor of the world, with his army, besieging Jerusalem and desecrating the temple. The word "abomination" means an idol or something idolatrous, the word "desolation" refers to the army looting and burning and destroying as it comes. So here is the way in which the destruction of the temple will be brought about; it had happened before in Jewish history; in older days it had been Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and Antiochus; it would now be the Roman emperor. Jesus says no more about the temple and its fate; he is talking now in the exalted language of the ancient prophets, and continues to do so. The ghastly events of those

days are veiled in conventional symbols which are drawn from the prophet Isaiah:

> The sun will be darkened.
> The moon will not give her light;
> The stars of heaven shall fall,
> The powers in the heaven shall be shaken.

This picture of eclipses and shooting stars is not to be taken literally; it is a graphic way of speaking of the complete darkness which will fall upon Israel at that time, indeed the darkness and despair will darken every heart.

THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN

The lector is now directed to turn to another passage in Daniel. It is best for us to do so too, and to look at rather more of it than the evangelists quote. It represents the coming of God's kingdom.

> I beheld until thrones were set up and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garments were white as snow [Daniel means the Eternal God]. . . . And I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him.

Jesus echoes this vision of a heavenly exaltation by saying, "Then shall they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds with great power and glory." Here is the glory and the kingdom which the risen Jesus is to have with God in heaven, but he adds the idea that men on earth would see it, men who were then living, as he makes clear in a later saying.

Are these words to be taken literally of a visible appearance in the sky, or do they refer to a spiritual or heavenly glory which would also be acknowledged by men on earth? Christians held different views about this. Jesus spoke so positively and in such vivid and glorious language about his heavenly glory and future coming, that many of them took it literally. St Paul did, for instance, some twenty years later in his

Epistles to the Thessalonians. He and his friend Silvanus seem to have thought that Jesus would soon appear visibly in the sky, but as he grew older he seems to have changed his viewpoint. St John, in his Gospel, took it to mean a spiritual and invisible coming in the Church in the Spirit. In his Revelation he depicts Jesus as standing in glory in the midst of the Church; but he also shows him enthroned in heaven, "on a white cloud", in connection with the judgement upon Jerusalem, and again as riding on to victory with his saints in the progress of the gospel and the witness of his martyrs. There is more than one way in which the advent hope was fulfilled.

So far as the words of Jesus in the gospel are concerned, there is nothing to prevent us from taking them literally if we want to do so; but we must also think of the judgement upon Jerusalem as a Coming of the Son of Man at that time, marking the fulfilment of his prophecy that the old Israelite order would pass away. He reigns in heaven, but he comes on earth wherever his gospel is preached, and his words are fulfilled, and his apostolic church meets for prayer and sacrament. His reign on earth began then.

The idea of the extension of his kingdom on earth is given in more symbols of the same kind: "he will send out his angels and gather his elect from the end of earth to the end of heaven."

Christians of all ages have debated the meaning of these utterances, and have often tried to apply them to their own times; but Jesus actually warns us against the people who say "Here it is" or "There it is". It would happen, he said, in the lifetime of that generation: "This generation shall not pass away until all these things come to pass." The Jews regarded about forty years as constituting a generation of men. "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation," God says in the ninety-fifth psalm; and it was almost exactly forty years later, in the year 70, that Jerusalem was devastated and the temple destroyed. By then his Church was well established upon this earth through the witness of his apostles and martyrs.

Furthermore, there is nothing about the "end of the world" in these sayings. There is nothing about a general resurrection or a universal judgement; indeed the word judgement is not used. It is all about something which is going to happen very soon inside human history. Jesus is going to die, but his kingdom and glory is to be established from heaven, and his message and mission is to go on. As it says in the very next verse of the quotation from Daniel,

> And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples and nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

And it may fairly be claimed that this is what happened.

ESCHATOLOGY

There is a wonderful modern word "eschatology" which is used by theologians about what are called "the last things"; the "end of the world", the resurrection of the dead, the final judgement, heaven and hell, and such ideas. The reader must be very cautious about these wonderful doctrines, which are expressed in the prophets and in the gospels in poetry and picture-language. They gather round the idea of judgement, but the old Hebrew idea of judgement is not ours. God is continually bringing about judgement in this world; the evil and tyrannous thing collapses and falls, the truth suffers long and is vindicated, "he who endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved." God is on the side of the elect who are faithful to him; he is actually with them in their suffering on behalf of his Name.

There is a great deal of this in St Matthew's Gospel. Given time, everything will work itself out. "Let it all grow together until the harvest," is one of the great sayings of Jesus which he reports; everybody will get their "reward" or "wages". The idea is expressed in harvest parables and pay-day parables. The judgement of God is not something which

he brings in from outside at the end of time, it is in grain in this world; harvest follows harvest, what a man sows he also reaps. Judgement will come to all.

Matthew places three magnificent parables of judgement after the Little Apocalypse on the Mount of Olives. The first is that of the Ten Virgins whose duty was to wait for the bridegroom, and while the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept; and then at midnight came the cry that he was coming, but five had no oil for their lamps. The motto is to watch since we do not know the day or hour.

The second is that of the rich man who went on a long journey and gave his servants money to trade with during his absence. The one of them who was given the least money did nothing with it, and his master had no mercy on him when he returned. These parables are inside the Church; they are for Christians who ought to be waiting and watching and working, not slackening in their devotion. The third is genuinely eschatological, it deals with the final judgement of all men; but it is entirely symbolic. It is given in picture-language. It is allegory.

The Son of Man comes with his holy angels and sits on the throne of his glory; all the nations are gathered before him and he separates them to the right and the left as a shepherd separates his sheep from his goats. Then he speaks to those on the right hand and invites them into his kingdom. "I was hungry," he says, "and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink," and so forth. But they were very much surprised. "When did we see you hungry or thirsty?" they asked. "Inasmuch as you did it to the least of these little brothers of mine, you did it to me."

It is not possible to deduce from the gospels any plan or programme of the "end of the world" or the "world to come". What appears is a profound evangelical truth. There are only two paths along which a man can walk in this life, and only two destinations at which he can arrive; both are described in parable language, one by the social joys of the wedding-feast, and the other by exclusion from them in the outer darkness, and by the fire which cannot be quenched.

As for the end of the world, if we mean by that the destruction of this creation by fire, I can find nothing in the gospels to support such an idea. There is no suggestion there that God will destroy his creation.

THE ADVENT IN THE CHURCH

No clear picture of the future of the world emerges from our study of the apocalyptic or adventist passages in the gospels. The future is in God's hands and is not known to men; but no generation will pass without judgement and without advent. The mind of the first Christians was filled with the idea, and it is an essential element in the gospel. One of its happiest forms was the thought of the advent in the bosom of the Church and in the heart of the believer. Jesus had said that he would return to his disciples and they believed that he did return.

In St John's Gospel the idea of the Advent of Christ is almost entirely absorbed into the idea of the Advent of the Holy Spirit in the Church. The thought is taken up in two simple phrases: "I am going away," Jesus says, and "I am coming to you"; "I will not leave you orphaned; I will come to you." Where the Holy Spirit comes, he comes. But there is also to be a "last day", and a resurrection of the dead, and a judgement; but it is not said when these are to be.

The idea of the Advent filled their prayers. One of the Aramaic words which passed into use in the gentile Churches was "Maranatha", which means "O Lord come", or possibly "The Lord cometh". He came to them in the ministry of the word and sacrament. Indeed we may not put any limitation on the number of ways in which they thought of him as coming. He was crowned and throned at God's right hand, but he was also with them where two or three were gathered in his Name.

11

The Passover

In our last chapter, we fell back on the devotional life of the primitive Church in order to shed light on certain sayings of Jesus; and this is a scientific way of proceeding, for his memory was perpetuated devotionally through the sacrament in the Church, as well as evangelically in the preaching. Jesus died on the Passover day, and on the night before, he had his "Last Supper" with his disciples, at which he gave them the sacrament of his body and blood, and asked them to remember him. It was at the sacrament, over the bread and wine, that they did so, and the stories were told, and took the form in which we have them; particularly of course at the Passover when the anniversary of his death came round.

We have followed St John in saying that the Last Supper took place the night before the Passover. The other evangelists say it was on the Passover night itself. This confusion may have been caused by the existence of different ways of keeping the Passover in the Church. Indeed it was kept on two successive days among the Jews outside Palestine, which must have been very confusing. It does not matter very much, but John seems to have felt himself obliged to correct the impression which was given by St Mark.

BETHANY

The passion story occupies twenty-four hours, but it has an introductory story in the Feast of Bethany, when Mary

the sister of Martha anointed the Lord's head with the ointment, and Judas objected. Jesus said that wherever his gospel was preached in the world, the story of what she had done would be told to keep her memory alive. It was already clear that his story would be told everywhere by the crowds of pilgrims returning to their homes; and the disciples must often have recalled this night as they sat together at the Lord's Supper.

The story also serves to introduce Judas Iscariot, and tell of his treachery. He went to the high priests and agreed to betray the whereabouts of Jesus. Many have been the speculations on the character and motives of Judas, but all are fruitless. There is one thing no ordinary honest man can understand, and that is how some trusted colleague can look you in the face, and talk to you as a friend, while he is working against you behind your back. There must have been deep, long-continued, psychological causes which led up to it. The money he got can hardly be the complete explanation.

THE LAST SUPPER

Jesus entered the city without publicity, a very different entry from the public one on Palm Sunday. Peter and John had made contact with some friends of Jesus who had a large upper room ready for him; there they all sat down together for the last time. The Jewish day ended at sunset, so that the Passover day actually began. It was the eve of the Passover.

There are three distinct passion stories. St Mark and St Matthew use the same one with only occasional differences; St Luke and St John each have their own. It would be quite impossible to consider all the material which they contain. St John tells us how Jesus girded himself with a towel, like a servant, and went round and washed the feet of his disciples, thus showing them how they ought to serve one another; he also gave them the "New Commandment, that you love one another even as I have loved you". St Luke adds a story which shows that the disciples must have been anxious about what was to happen that night. Peter had provided himself with a

couple of swords and had apparently sold his cloak to do so. Jesus rebukes him gently.

As they sit at the table, Jesus informs them that one of them is going to betray him. It seems that he had Peter on his left and John on his right, reclining on couches as the custom was, and that he gave John a hint of which would be the one to do it. Then he said to Judas, "Whatever you do, do it quickly"; and Judas went out into the night. Jesus had given him his last chance to redeem himself; even at this stage he might have saved his soul.

THE SACRAMENT

The exact order in which these various events occurred is not clear, neither does it matter; but we would think that Judas was not there when Jesus gave his disciples the sacrament. It was the custom among the Jews for meals to begin with the breaking of the loaf, and a doxology or blessing addressed to God; a blessing was also said over the wine-cup; religious groups were accustomed to dine together and discuss holy things, and it was felt that God's presence rested among them when they did so. Jesus had given the mystery of the broken bread in Galilee; but he had given no words. Now he said, "This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me." This is me, he meant; this is myself, "Take this". He gave himself for them.

He also added the cup. "This is my blood of the new covenant," or "The new covenant in my blood"; "My blood of the covenant, which is shed for many. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me." He gave his life for them.

He was making the covenant on which the Christian religion stands. It was the completion of everything that he had said and done. It was the offering of his own body as a sacrifice to God, it was his everlasting covenant with his disciples; it united him with them, and God with man, in a covenant-relation which took the place of the old covenant which had been made with Israel on Mount Sinai and was remembered every year in the Passover ritual.

It also looked forward into the future to a companionship beyond death. "I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine," he said, "till I drink it new with you in the Kingdom of God." There would be communion in the future, and they would drink wine together in God's Kingdom. He would be exalted in glory in the world beyond, and they would be reclining at his table on earth, and yet they would be drinking wine together. It would be all one. With this stroke Jesus created Christianity. He could leave them now. The errors which are made in many quite earnest efforts to understand the words of Christ, often come from trying to interpret them by themselves, apart from the sacramental fellowship which he created. In order to understand them it is necessary to pass through the fellowship experiences. When we do that, the words about his coming back to his disciples cease to be so difficult. The remembrance of the upper room, and the mysteries of the blessed sacrament provide the flesh-and-blood medium in which they come to life; for Christianity is essentially a mystical fellowship, a quite simple human fellowship, but with a divine core or kernel: Jesus himself mediating God's grace and glory to men.

St John goes on to give mystical discourses of Jesus in which these ideas are developed. It is through the Holy Spirit, which animates the fellowship, that the Lord will come back to his own. He will see them again, and their hearts will rejoice, and their joy will never be taken from them.

GETHSEMANE

They sing a psalm and pass out into the cool night-air; and the strange sense of divine presence and purpose continues. Jesus is speaking of himself as the great shepherd of the sheep; he will be struck down as John was, and they will be scattered and fall by the wayside; but when he is risen, he will lead them as the shepherd does, he will go before them into Galilee. Peter swears that he will never fail his master, and Jesus makes his sombre forecast: Before the cock crows, Peter will deny him three times.

They come to the place called Gethsemane. Jesus sets his guard, and orders them to watch. He goes on a little further with the three, and orders them to watch too. He prays, and they fall asleep. It is a mysterious prayer; he asks that the cup may pass away from him, the cup which he had just accepted and blessed. There is a conflict or agony here; it is almost as if something in him weakened for a moment, for he was not an inhuman fanatic who did not love life. The three heard parts of what he said: "Father . . . if it be possible . . . nevertheless . . . thy will be done." The mountain was successfully cast into the ocean.

THE BETRAYAL

It must now be about the midnight hour, though this note of time is not given. It is your hour, Jesus says to his enemies, and the reign of darkness.

The four evangelists taken together give the effect of many figures moving in the darkness; armed men appearing among the olive trees, lanterns shining in the shadows. The full moon was now high in the heavens. Judas stepped forward and saluted his master with a kiss. This must have been the normal salutation of a disciple. The police and soldiers closed in upon them. A figure leapt out of the darkness with a sword, and hit the officer of the high priest on the ear. For many years the secret was well-kept, but John reveals the fact that it was Peter. He disappears into the darkness again.

Jesus protests against this violent arrest; he was with them every day in the temple, teaching. Why did they not take him then?

They move off to the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, or according to John, the palace of his father-in-law Annas, the immediate past high priest. The disciples have been scattered as Jesus had said. Some attempt to follow him; Peter and John manage to get into the palace. A young man whose name is not given, evades arrest by leaving his loose linen covering in the hands of his captors.

The examination before Caiaphas was not a legal trial; it was an attempt to procure evidence, and break down the prisoner, and make him confess. Jesus endured it in silence; he made no answer at all. The witnesses went through their evidence; he had said he would destroy the temple which was made with hands, in three days he would put up another not made with hands; Jesus let them talk, and eventually they contradicted themselves.

The High Priest rises and addresses Jesus. He is the ruler of God's people, God's representative on earth in sacred things. He is amazed that Jesus has nothing to say. He puts the question to him: "Are *you* the Messiah, the Son of God?" (Son of the Blessed, he actually said, avoiding the word God out of motives of reverence.) No doubt he spoke in scorn and hardly expected an answer. He got it. "I am," said Jesus, or "You have said it." Never before had he avowed it in public, now he made the claim before the highest authority in Israel; the two opposite types of religious leadership stood face to face for a moment. He added a further declaration: "From this moment you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power (he means God) and coming in the clouds of heaven." He is combining the words of David with the words of Daniel. From now onwards, from the day of his crucifixion, the divine mission and authority of Jesus would become more and more apparent, and his kingdom and glory be more widely recognized. Before long the reign and rule of Caiaphas and his high-priestly line would disappear for ever; the reign and rule of Jesus as Son of God would evermore extend. The words of Daniel which he used implied the doctrine of the everlasting kingdom; the words of David from the Psalm (110) implied the everlasting priesthood.

The High Priest "tore his robes", a gesture which expressed his sense of shock and consternation. "It is blasphemy," he said, "You all heard it." The whole gathering agreed. They all assented to his death. They began to mock at him and beat him. It was a wild disorderly procedure.

COCK-CROW

It was now about three hours before dawn; three o'clock in the morning or thereabouts. Cock-crow was the regular name for this hour of the night, and it was probably sounded on a trumpet from the Tower of Antonia, the headquarters of Pilate and the Roman garrison.

Peter was in difficulties. It was a cold night, and he had seated himself by the fire, and a girl had recognized him. "You were with Jesus of Nazareth, too," she said. He denied it, but she pursued him out into the porch, where he took refuge. Others took up the accusation; they recognized him as a Galilean by his accent. Three times in all he denied his master; and then he heard the cock crow, or the trumpet sound, whichever it was, and he remembered what Jesus had said. The Lord turned and looked at Peter, we read in Luke's gospel. He went out and broke down in tears, and we see no more of him for some time.

The organization which Jesus had built up in Galilee appeared to have completely broken down. He was alone.

PONTIUS PILATE

When dawn came, the High Priest summoned an official meeting of the Sanhedrin, which confirmed the charges against Jesus; and he was brought before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, to receive sentence. Here they altered the accusation. They charged him with rebellion against the government; he had attempted to make himself king, he had told men not to pay taxes to the Emperor. Jesus refused to answer these charges, and Pilate was amazed at his silence.

St John, it is true, tells of a private conversation with Pilate, in which the question of kingship was discussed. "My kingdom is not of this world," Jesus said. "If it was, my servants would be fighting." "Are *you* a king?" Pilate asked, in a superior manner. "That is why I was born," said Jesus. "That is why I came into the world, to be a witness to the truth." "And what is truth?" said Pilate.

Bacon, no doubt, was right in his famous epigram: "What is truth, said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer." In everything that Pilate does and says, he appears weaker and more despicable. He wanted to save Jesus; he could see that the charge against him was malicious, and that he was an innocent man; but he had no courage. He had the right at Passover time to set free a prisoner, and he suggested that he should set free the King of the Jews, as he now began to call him. The crowds wanted Barabbas, a robber and revolutionary who was in prison with some of his followers. Those who shouted for Barabbas must not be confused with those who shouted Hosanna; but where were those who shouted Hosanna? There was not one to suffer with Jesus.

Pilate condemned Jesus because he was afraid of what the emperor might do if he heard about it. He handed him over to the soldiers to be scourged and crucified. The scourging was done with a whip of leather lashes reinforced with pieces of lead; it was designed to kill. After that they dressed him in a purple cloak, put a crown of thorns on his head, and mocked him. European Christians have often allowed themselves to put all the blame upon the Jews for the murder of Jesus; but do the representatives of Europe come out of it very well? It was a western army of occupation that did these things.

St John tells how Pilate brought out Jesus in this condition at a place called the Pavement, where his judgment seat had been set up. He showed him to the people, and said, "Behold the Man"; but they had no pity, they shouted out all the louder, "Away with him! Crucify him!" Quite recently, in the course of excavations, they found this paved courtyard in Jerusalem; it lies between the Tower of Antonia and the temple.

THE CRUCIFIXION

Many details about the crucifixion are given in the gospels, and it is not for us to catalogue them all in a book of this kind. It was done on a hill called Golgotha or Calvary, which was

outside the wall of the city. The traditional site, which is marked by the Church of the resurrection, is inside the present walls; but the walls of the time of Jesus have not yet been discovered. They may have included it. It was the third hour after dawn, St Mark says: St John says it was the sixth, which would be midday; but nobody carried clocks and watches then, and each man told the story in his own way. It was on the morning of the Passover, which happened to be a Friday.

He went out carrying his own cross, John says; but he must have been too weak to continue, for the other gospels tell how a man called Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry it for him; St Mark says he was the father of Alexander and Rufus, so it looks as if these boys were well-known in the Church when he wrote his gospel. Two thieves were crucified with him, one on the right and the other on the left. As Jesus was being nailed to the cross, he said, "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing."

Over his head was nailed a piece of paper or wood with the words of the charge for which he was condemned: "JESUS OF NAZARETH KING OF THE JEWS". The Jews did not like this very much, but Pilate insisted upon it. Many of them marched up and down, and mocked at him; if he was the Messiah the King of Israel, or if he was the Son of God, or if he could destroy the temple and build it again in three days, why could he not save himself and come down from the cross? One of the crucified thieves protested against this, St Luke tells us; then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom"; Jesus said, "This day you will be with me in Paradise."

St John tells us how he stood by with the Virgin Mary, and how Jesus commended his mother to his care; he took her away to his own home, he says.

There was a centurion and four soldiers who had carried out the sentence, and had to stay and watch the prisoner; they were dividing up his clothes, but the long tunic was so beautiful that they decided to throw dice for it rather than to cut it up. They had some wine with them, home-made

wine off a farm, which they called vinegar; they offered Jesus a drink, at one time in mockery it would seem, but at another in kindness.

At the end Jesus spoke out strong and clear. His words were these: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?": "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" They are the first words of the twenty-second psalm, which is the prayer of one who had suffered very much as Jesus himself was suffering; and it appears that he spoke them in the old Hebrew in which they were written. They tell of the agony of soul through which he passed, and of the darkness out of which he called to God; God answered his prayer, he died instantly. The Roman centurion was amazed, he had never seen anything like it; "Truly this man was a son of God," he said.

THE BURIAL

Jesus still had friends; and a number were watching from a distance. St John had taken away the mother of Jesus by now, we would think; but there were three other women, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Little and Joses, and Salome the mother of James and John. We have no idea who James the Little and Joses were, but they must have been well known when Mark wrote his gospel.

Among the other friends were two leading Pharisees, who were members of the Sanhedrin; for it seems that there were leading men in this party who had not at all approved of the murder of Jesus. One was Nicodemus who had come and conferred with Jesus by night two years before. The other was Joseph of Arimathaea, of whom nothing else is known. He was a rich man who lived nearby, and in his garden there was a tomb cut out in the rock, in which no one had ever yet been buried; he had the courage to go to Pilate and ask for the body. Pilate was amazed that Jesus had died so quickly, but he got a report from the centurion, and allowed Joseph to have the body. There was an additional reason for quick action. It was nearly sunset, and when the sun set the sabbath

day would begin, and the Law demanded that the body must be buried first. Nicodemus brought a linen cloth and some spices. Hurriedly they placed the body in the tomb and rolled the stone to the door. The sun set. The story of the passion of Jesus was finished. The Passover day was done.

12

Easter Day

THE RESURRECTION

It is not possible to tell the story of the resurrection in the same way as we tell the story of the crucifixion. The crucifixion was a human drama which was acted out publicly under the sun before many witnesses. It could have been photographed or televised if such inventions had existed then. As it was, they did very well. It was retold, we may almost say that it was re-enacted, in the Church, from Sunday to Sunday, and from year to year; in the evangelical preaching, and in the sacrament. Once more he stood among them, and was known to them in the breaking of the bread. And this process has never stopped; it has flowed on continuously like a river; at some point on the surface of the earth, at any given moment of time, some Christian minister is telling the story of the passion, or breaking the bread of the sacrament. And so it will go on in ever-increasing volume for ever: "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you declare the death of the Lord until he comes again," St Paul said.

The resurrection was part of the evangelical preaching from the beginning; but it was not transmitted the same way as the passion. It was not a human drama enacted in public for all to see. Jesus only appeared to those who believed in him; he came unexpectedly, and sometimes in a strange form. The stories are full of the consternation and amazement which was created by his appearance. Each Apostle or group of Apostles seems to have given his witness in his own way. It

would appear that Peter never told his own story to the world at all. The gospels faithfully represent this variety of experience and witness.

We may even ask whether it would be possible to give a simple literal story of a resurrection experience, seeing that there was nothing else in human experience to compare it with? Was there not a heavenly glory that came with it, and a spiritual power striking into the heart, which was beyond the art of any story-teller to describe? May it not have affected different persons in different ways? May they not have used the old symbolic language of apocalypse and liturgy to express what it meant to them? May they not have had some purely visionary experience with it? There is great variety in the stories, and they are told, for the most part, in the simplest manner, but we are treading on holy ground when we read them.

It seems that such visionary or symbolic expressions, like the words of a great hymn, do come, even in the story of the crucifixion. When it says that there was darkness over the whole land, may not this mean the darkness in human hearts, or even the darkness that was to engulf the old religion, which had failed to recognize the lord of glory? When it says that the veil of the temple was torn in two, may it not mean that the old temple tradition was at an end, and the way into God's presence had been opened by the death of the Son of God, and his entrance into the other world? Matthew tells us that there was an earthquake, and the rocks were rent, and the saints of old arose and appeared to many in the holy city; it would be strange indeed if devout souls did not have these experiences and visions at such a time.

ST PAUL'S GOSPEL

What we begin with is the fact that the disciples of Jesus believed that they had seen him risen from the dead, as all scholars admit. The passion story leaves them scattered and dismayed and ashamed; but history shows that almost at once they had reconstituted the organization, they were witnessing

boldly for Jesus, and proclaiming in Jerusalem itself that he had risen from the dead. This change was not produced by something in themselves; it was due to a power which came to them from the other side of death.

A year or two later St Paul was converted, and was taught a set form of words, which he handed on to his gentile Churches, and wrote down in his first Epistle to the Corinthians; it was an official declaration about the resurrection. He calls it the gospel. It does not tell any stories at all; it simply gives a list of witnesses. Nothing could be more important for our purposes. It says that Jesus died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and on the third day he rose again according to the scriptures; and by the scriptures it means the prophets of the Old Testament who had foretold the coming of the Messiah.

First of all, it says, he appeared to Peter, then to the twelve, then to more than five hundred brethren at once, of whom some were dead by then, but the majority were still living. This seems to comprise one group of people. Then, it says, he appeared to James, and then to all the Apostles. This seems to comprise another group; and it is a surprise, because when Paul speaks of James, he always means the brother of the Lord. Last of all, he says, he appeared to me too, like someone being born at the wrong time. There was something extraordinary about the appearance to Paul, that is, and we can see from the Acts what it was; it happened about two years later than all the others, after such appearances seemed to have stopped.

Peter, James, and Paul were heads of different groups in the Church at that time, and had different views on some points; but none at all about the gospel. "Whether it is I or they, so it was that we preached and so you believed."

THE EMPTY TOMB

The first thing we notice is that Paul does not mention the women; and that is because he is giving the list of apostolic witnesses; but actually the women were very important

because they were the first to come and find the tomb empty.

We do learn from Paul, however, that Jesus rose on the third day, which we would prefer to call the second day, according to our western arithmetic. This appears in every form of the tradition; and every gospel tells us that it was the first day of the week, meaning Sunday. This element in the gospel was so firmly fixed that it influenced the Church to keep every Sunday as a festival in honour of the resurrection. It must have been an undoubted universal gospel fact that produced such an effect. Friday was the day on which he was taken from them; Sunday was the day on which he came back.

The Jews had always kept the seventh day, Saturday, as a day of rest, but this fell out of use among Christians. We are not told how this was decided (though Acts fifteen makes it clear that the old Law of Moses was not binding on non-Jewish Christians). All that we know is that it happened: Sunday took its place. A Sunday service is described in Acts 20: they kept vigil all night; some time after midnight, and before dawn, they had the breaking of the bread; and they did not part till the dawn came. It may be that Jewish Christians still kept the sabbath, but gentile Christians have never kept it.

On Sunday morning, just before dawn, the women went to the tomb with their spices. This is described in all four gospels. The burial of Jesus had been a very hurried affair, and there were still duties to be done. As they went they were wondering who would roll away the stone for them, but as they came near they could see it had been rolled away. They went in and found that the tomb was empty. They saw a vision too, but we will come to that later.

Naturally others came to examine the tomb. St Luke mentions this; and St John in his gospel tells how he and Peter came and found it was just as the women had said; but they saw no vision.

St Matthew tells of an angel descending and rolling the stone away, but this may be one of his visionary and poetic

touches; no human power had done this thing. He also tells how the priests had put a guard on the tomb, and how amazed the soldiers were, and how the priests bribed them to say that the disciples had stolen the body away while they were asleep. It is rather a strange story, and Matthew does not seem very sure of it himself; he says that it was "commonly reported among the Jews unto this day." He records the story as it came to him.

WHAT THE WOMEN SAW

Each gospel has a rather different account of what the women saw. St Mark and St Matthew record a vision of a young man in white robes who calmed their fears. "Fear not," he said. "You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified; he is risen; he is not here; this is the place where they laid him. But go your way, and tell his disciples and Peter that he is leading you into Galilee; you will see him there as he told you." They fled in terror from the tomb, and there the story breaks off. The gospel of St Mark finishes with this message. Some scholars think that the end of it has been lost by some accident, but others think that he deliberately finished it in this dramatic way. He was giving the reminiscences of Peter, and it seems that Peter never told his story of the Lord's appearance to him.

Not long after the time of St Mark, somebody added some more verses, which are usually printed in our Bibles as verses 9 to the end. They say that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene; and St John has an account of this appearance too; but Matthew speaks of an appearance to all the women. We can well imagine what excitement and confusion there would be on that morning when the tomb was found empty, and how hard it would be to piece together everybody's impressions and recollections. The accounts agree in the main, but faithfully preserve the impression of confusion and amazement. St Luke, for instance, says that two angels appeared to the women in the tomb; and all we can say is that he received the story in that form, and therefore one of the women told it in that form.

The outstanding unexpected fact is that Jesus did not appear first to his Apostles, but to a number of women, whose faith and courage had exceeded theirs. The chief of them was one we have never heard of before, and do not hear of again, the mysterious Mary of Magdala. In this manner the resurrection gospel was brought to the Apostles themselves; but their joy would be darkened by feelings of guilt and misery; had he not said, when he was in Galilee, "If any man is ashamed of me and of my words in this wicked and adulterous generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." But he had added, "There are some standing here who will not taste of death until they do see the Kingdom of God come in power."

THE APPEARANCE IN GALILEE

St Luke gives the message of the angels in a form which recalls these sayings: "Remember how he spoke to you, while he was still in Galilee"; and that, no doubt, is how he received the story. Mark and Matthew got their stories from the Galilean tradition; Luke got his from the Jerusalem Church.

Matthew tells how the eleven disciples did go into Galilee, and met Jesus on the mountain where he had appointed them. When they saw him they worshipped him, though there were still some who doubted. Jesus then gave them the great commission to go out and teach all the nations, and promised that he would be with them to the end of the world. Perhaps it was in Galilee that he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at once.

Matthew, with his Galilean information, has nothing more to tell about appearances in Jerusalem; Luke, with his Jerusalem information, has nothing to tell about appearances in Galilee. Each is content to write down what had come to him. We must return to Jerusalem and to Easter Sunday.

Nobody tells the story of the appearance to Peter; nobody tells the story of the appearance to James. Not long after the four gospels were written, the Jewish Christians produced a gospel of their own, which was called the Hebrew Gospel. It is lost, but a few quotations are given in ancient authors. In this gospel, Jesus appears to James before he appears to any of his apostles: "He went unto James and appeared to him [for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour wherein he had drunk the Lord's cup, until he should see him risen from among them that sleep] . . . Bring ye, saith the Lord, a table and bread . . . and he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it unto James the Just, and said unto him, My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of Man is risen, from among them that sleep."

This story was written down about a hundred years later, in the Jewish Church, which looked back to James as its first bishop. It agrees with other recorded Jerusalem appearances, in being connected with the sacrament. St Luke tells how two men, one of them named Cleopas (who may have been a brother of the Virgin Mary) were walking sadly back to their home not far from Jerusalem, on Easter Sunday afternoon. They got into conversation with a stranger, who appeared to be a learned scholar from another country. They persuaded him to stay the night with them; but when they sat down to supper, he took the bread and said a blessing over it; then he broke it and gave it to them, and vanished out of their sight. The companion of Cleopas may have been James the brother of the Lord.

They went back to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together at supper. They were saying that the Lord had really risen, and had appeared to Peter, and as they spoke, he stood in the midst of them himself, and said, "Peace be unto you." He joined in their supper, and then walked with them as far as Bethany, where he blessed them, and disappeared from their sight, being taken up into heaven. He told them not to sever their connection with Jerusalem, but

to wait there until they were clothed with power from on high; they were to be his witnesses, and the gospel of repentance was to be preached to all nations.

ST JOHN'S GOSPEL

St John's gospel was written after all the others, and combines stories from Jerusalem with a story from Galilee. He tells the story of the appearance to all the disciples on the Sunday evening, but he gives an example of what was meant by some of them doubting. One disciple was missing on that occasion, St Thomas. Thomas would not be convinced, "Unless I see the print of the nails in his hands, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." On the next Sunday they met again, and Thomas was there. The Lord appeared and invited him to touch his hands and his side, but it is not recorded that Thomas did so; he looked at him and said, "My lord and my God."

This was the Sunday after Easter, the second Sunday in the history of the Christian Church.

The disciples then went away into Galilee. In St Luke they are commanded to stay in Jerusalem, but this does not mean that they were never to visit Galilee again. It meant that they were to make Jerusalem their headquarters, and a visit to Galilee would become necessary if only to make the arrangements for this transfer. Once there they decided to go fishing on the Galilean Lake; there were Peter and Thomas and Nathaniel and James and John and two more disciples. They worked all night and caught nothing. Early in the morning they saw Jesus standing on the shore, but did not recognize him; he directed them to cast their net on the right side of the ship, and they took in a great number of fish—one hundred and fifty-three. (I am told on Labrador that fishermen never fail to count their fish.)

Peter now saw that it was Jesus. He threw on his coat, tightened up his belt, plunged into the water, and waded ashore, dragging the net after him; he must have been a man of enormous physical powers. A fire was burning on the

beach with fish cooking on it, and there was bread. They joined their master and he took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. Then they began to talk.

Peter was received back into favour, and commanded to feed Christ's sheep; he was to be the shepherd of the flock, and would give his life for his master.

There was a word for John too, "If it is my wish that he wait until I come, what is that to thee?" St John lived to such a great age that the idea went round that he would never die; but Jesus had not said that, we are told; he had said, "If I want him to tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" He was so old when he wrote his gospel, that it is probable that he did not do all of the labour on it himself. There is a note at the end of it which reads: "This is the disciple who bore witness of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his witness is true." Those who wrote this note would seem to be his colleagues and helpers.

St Peter carried the gospel as far as Rome and died as a martyr in the persecution of 64, or not long after. His body lies buried in Rome; no doubt it is under the high altar of the church which is named in his honour. St John carried the gospel as far as Ephesus, in Asia Minor, and died there in his old age, perhaps as late as the year 100. His tomb was shown for many years, but it is not now known where it stood. St Matthew remained in Palestine.

CONCLUSION

Those who have devoted their lives to historical research know well that the best human testimony varies in its detail. Good evidence from various quarters will never agree in all particulars; if it does, we know that it is not really independent, the witnesses are copying one another. The gospels are like other good human evidence in this particular; and it comes out especially strongly in the case of the resurrection, because we have so many good independent witnesses. There is enough of it to establish over and over again that the Apostles, and many other disciples of Jesus too, saw him after

he had risen from the dead, or, what comes to the same thing, they believed they had. They believed it so strongly that they were ready to give their lives for it. They preached it throughout the world in spite of discouragement and persecution. They were ready to die for it, and some of them did die for it. It is the gospel on which Christianity is founded.

Christianity is not founded on the wonderful things that Jesus said, though the believer naturally loves them and guides his life by them. It is founded on Jesus himself. It is devotion to him as lord and master; not as a wonderful man who lived a long time ago, and unfortunately died, but as the Son of God who overcame death and opened unto us the gates of everlasting life; who rose from the dead, is enthroned at the right hand of God, and will come again in glory; who is with us now, through his Holy Spirit, in the fellowship of the Church, when it meets for gospel and for sacrament and for prayer. It was like that from the beginning, because he made it like that from the beginning when he said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

In the four gospels we have honest sincere evidence from various sources given by men who loved him and were devoted to his service. These various stories of Jesus are only a selection from a still greater store of them which has not come down to us. For St John wrote, at the end of his gospel, these final words: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

A Last Word: The Gospel in the Church

It was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead which gave power to the gospel and filled up everything that had gone before; but there was another promise which had to be fulfilled, he was to "baptize them in the Holy Spirit"; to immerse them, that is, in the flood of God's power and grace, and pour it into their bodies and souls. He was to be with them and in them, and this infusion of power from God became the way in which he continued to be their Lord and Master to the end of time.

St Paul, who did so much to interpret the gospel to the world, insisted that the Spirit had its dwelling in the bodies of the believers; their bodies, he insisted, constituted the temple of the Spirit; God dwelt among them. Flesh and blood could not inherit the kingdom of God, he thought, but Holy Spirit could be transfused into the flesh-and-blood fellowship of the saints.

The resurrection of Christ was not simply the conquest of death by the Son of God, and his emergence from the tomb in newness of life; it was the reunion of the risen Jesus with the fellowship of his Apostles and brethren, and his communication to them of heavenly power. It was the continuation on a higher level of the flesh-and-blood relationship which he had inaugurated beforehand. The origins of Christianity cannot be understood by considering this or that doctrine or practice apart from this human fellowship within which they belonged.

The story begins in the Old Testament. God communicates himself by his Word and his Spirit and his Presence to mankind; he imparts himself to them in spiritual converse, and strives with them; he works through men like Abraham and Moses and Elijah; he uses their flesh-and-blood at frightful cost to them; he enters deeply into human relations; he creates from within his holy nation of Israel, and prepares it for the coming of his Son. He anticipates the incarnation.

The Son of God is born within the holy nation, of the Virgin Mary; he takes human nature upon himself, and enters deeply into human relations with the Israelite people. He comes as the son of David and the Son of Man and the successor of all the priests and prophets and kings who had been men of God in their time. He fulfils all the old hopes and desires and prophecies which had been announced long before. He lives this life; he talks this language; he clothes himself in this tradition; and as he does so, he transforms it to serve the purposes of God's gospel and to establish his Kingdom among men.

It is throughout a revelation given in terms of human relations; the relations of God with man, and men with men, in the Kingdom. Little by little, as their faith grows stronger and their insight clearer, he reveals to them the mysteries of the Kingdom; first in his message of forgiveness and his acts of power wrought on men's bodies, then in the social life which he created among those who believed on him, then in the life of prayer, and the teaching about the Kingdom, then in the parables, the inner meaning of which was hidden from the world, for none of these things can be understood apart from his own personality in which the revelation consisted.

In the centre of this mystical fellowship he created the apostolate, to which he committed his own personal mission and authority as Son of God, training them, striving with them, trusting them, loving them, and sending them out in his name; for their mission was his, and his was further extended in theirs. As he takes all these steps the fundamental fact of the conflict with evil in the world and in the human heart emerges with greater clarity; it was a conflict with the

religious authorities of his nation, with the Apostles themselves, and finally with death in a horrible form. He gives them the doctrine of the cross which is the supreme expression of the great paradox of death and glory; he gives them the farewell sacrament of his body and blood; he gives them himself; he gives them everything. He could not more closely identify himself with them than he does.

The heart of the apostolic gospel is this tremendous flesh-and-blood fact of the death and resurrection; but the death and resurrection are both intimately related with the apostolic fellowship. The empty tomb was indeed an external fact which was duly observed and verified; but the resurrection of the Son of God was a fact within the fellowship, a fact of personal relations with his disciples and brethren. It is for them he dies and rises again, for them he reigns at God's right hand, for them he comes again in glory; and for the world in due course. The Holy Spirit is poured out upon them and the apostolic mission at once begins; at first to Israel and then to the world at large. It spreads abroad, it grows and increases, it ramifies to the ends of the earth. It continues to do so unto this day.

The substance of Christianity as a fact of history is this fellowship of God with them, and men with men, in Jesus Christ; with its apostolic ministry which carries the gospel of the resurrection, and proclaims it out of its own experience, and has the inbreathing of the Holy Spirit as its life and power. Within this divine communion and fellowship, which is called the catholic Church, the worship of the Father, the words of Jesus, the sacraments and acts of power, and indeed the whole work of redemption and salvation, are continued to the day on which he comes again for all to see. It is through this holy, catholic, and apostolic Church that he speaks to men through human lips, and heals and blesses and restores them through human hands. He came to men, he continues to come, and he evermore will come. He will come in the glory of his Father, on the clouds of heaven, and with all the holy angels.

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